THE GLORY OF HIS ROBE

EDWARD JOHN STOBO

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THE GLORY OF HIS ROBE

EDWARD JOHN STOBO, M.A., S.T.D.

At last with evening as I turned
Homeward, and thought what I had learned,
And all that there was still to probe . . .
Where the last fires of sunset burned
I caught the glory of His robe.

—Bliss Carman.

THE GLORY OF HIS ROBE

Meditations for the Quiet Hour

BY

EDWARD JOHN STOBO

M.A., S.T.D.

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THE GLORY OF HIS ROBE. II.

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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I

THE FACT OF CONVERSION

SOME years ago, Professor George Jackson wrote a scholarly and helpful book upon this subject. I used to have a copy of it; but ownership and possession are not identical. Some unknown book borrower is in possession of the book, but I own it still. That ownership profits me nothing at the present moment, for the other man is receiving all the benefits which accrue from "being seized of" that little volume. I am hoping that should he peruse this book, he may call to remembrance a fact that occasioned a miracle to be performed to ensure the return of a lost axe-head: "Alas, Master! It was borrowed."

Conversion is a fact which every honest soul must reckon with. All about him there are men and women, who claim to have experienced a wonderful inner change which they call conversion. He hears the Salvation Army shouting out their experiences upon the street corner: and the earnestness of the men and women, who wear the uniform and march under the

"blood and fire flag," together with their proved love for the unfortunate and the fallen, gives point to their testimony. The most colossal and unbending thing to face is a fact; and the men and women, who tell their experiences upon the street corner deal, not with theory but with fact, so they say. An honest soul should listen with respect, and ponder the claims which they make.

An old Scotch farmer is reported to have said to his new minister: "We have doots aneuch noo. Tell us, mon, what ye know." There are some things which the preacher cannot be expected to know; but it is reasonable to expect that any preacher or religious journalist should be able to satisfactorily answer such a question as: "Do you know the forgiveness of sins? Have you experienced what some folks call conversion?" No man should get on his dignity when a seeking soul asks that; for preaching is, first and foremost, a personal testimony. "We preach that we do know and testify that we have seen," says the Apostle Paul. Take the ring of personal certainty out of the preacher's message, and it is not worth listening to. The herald of the gospel makes a demand for faith; but faith is not credulity. Our hope is not a brilliant and shadowy "perhaps." It is an assurance, a conviction. We want to be held in the grip of a great certainty. We love the message which is like an echo from Paul's Roman prison: "I know Whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day." The realm of religious experience is not a realm of theory but a realm of fact. Thus it is that the average

man is justified in asking public teachers what they know about it.

The observant individual cannot fail to notice that certain lives have a strange sweetness, a wondrous charm, a helpfulness and sympathy that has to be accounted for somehow. It is impossible to explain such a life as that of "Mother Davis" of the Yonge Street Mission upon the assumption that she was just naturally philanthropic. That is not the claim which she herself made. It is not the explanation given by the multitudes who looked upon her coffin last Thursday week. They know that the secret of that beautiful life of service lies in the fact that she had met with Christ. She never wearied of telling what a marvellous and soul-satisfying thing is a Christian experience.

It is worthy of remembrance that men, who have the scientist's instinct for facts, have a great deal of respect for that "sudden, enduring and extraordinary change which St. Augustine and all the other Fathers call conversion." Professor George Romanes, when he was slowly finding his way back to the Christian faith, made use of the language just quoted, and admitted that it was reasonable to be a Christian believer. Before his death, this brilliant scholar came into full deliberate communion with Jesus Christ for Whom his heart had long yearned.

I am using the word "conversion" in the sense that the average man uses it. These chapters have nothing to do with theological hair-splitting. Many centuries ago, two famous Apostles, Peter and John, healed a lame man in Jerusalem at the Gate Beautiful.

It created a mighty stir, for he was a well-known character—a beggar, who had, for many a year, solicited alms of the visitors to the Jewish Temple. In the estimation of the Apostles, the psychological moment had arrived in which to testify to the power of the risen Lord, and "they preached in Jesus the resurrection from the dead." That subject was a controverted one. The Saviour, through whom the possibility of such a resurrection was proclaimed, had recently been executed upon a charge of treason. The ecclesiastical theology was at stake. The justice of the Roman Administration seemed to be called in question. The men on the Bench, whose duty it was to try Peter and John as disturbers of the peace, had a mighty problem upon their hands, and, at the centre of it, was a fact. Listen to them consulting! "A notable miracle hath been wrought through them. It is manifest to all that dwell in Jerusalem. We cannot deny it." The spirit of this exclamation may be applied to every genuine, life-transforming conversion which we witness. We cannot deny it.

Conversion is the soul's return to God, and the return is always by the way of that cross upon which the "scarred Brother of suffering men" poured out His life. The awful transaction upon Calvary has a very real and vital relationship to our turning to the Saviour of sinners for forgiveness and renewal.

Conversion takes many forms; but we have no right to declare that any soul is outside of the Kingdom just because he has not the identical experience which we have. Conversion has a life to show as the result of it.

In the words of Romanes, conversion is "not a mere change of belief or of opinion. The point is that it is a modification of character." It is far easier to detect a modification of character in one who has been known as a hardened sinner, than in another man, who has lived a moral life, been a good husband, kind father and worthy citizen. Hence many a preacher, in his anxiety to illustrate what conversion does for a man, is apt to gather his examples from the notorious sinners whom the Lord has graciously pardoned, and to forget that He has also received little children, lovely maidens, noble youths, women like Dorcas, "full of good works and alms deeds which she did," and men like Cornelius of Cæsarea, "a devout man, one that feared God with all his house, who gave much alms to the people and prayed to God always." It is because so many preachers gather their illustrations from such books as Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and Harold Begbie's "Twice-Born Men" that many of their hearers feel that, for some reason, the message has no gripping power. It does not "get home to their hearts and bosoms." But the parson's failure to bring the message home to his hearers does not invalidate the fact—There is such a thing as conversion. "We cannot deny it."

II

THE WORTH OF A SMILE

A LITTLE while ago, in an Eastern Ontario town, at a meeting of a Sunshine club, this story was told by one of the speakers: A young lad in the United States somewhere, was out nutting, and, in his quest, had climbed a tree. He came into contact with an electric wire which had been run through the fóliage and was hidden from all but the very observant. The wire also was not properly insulated, and the poor laddie's face was burned. It was not a very deep scar, but it came in a very bad place. His father sued the electric light company and got $20,000 for his son, and the whole countryside was amused. A little scar upon a boy's face, $20,000! Absurd!! Yes, but remember another element that entered into the decision. The nerve which controlled the smile-muscle was destroyed, and the poor laddie could not smile any more. The jury gravely considered the loss the laddie had sustained, and estimated the damages at $20,000. Now, I have not told the story as it is told down East, but I have given the heart of the anecdote, and perhaps you agree with me that it is a most unfortunate thing to lose your smile.

You are all aware that a dog smiles by means of

his tail, and that the old Dutchman, when offered twenty-five dollars for his dog, declared that he would not sell "von vag of his leetle tail" for the money; and that some children have a wonderful bright smile that makes its way into the very depth of your soul. You cannot resist the child with such a smile. You get to look for it; you seek to coax it out; you like to meditate upon it; and, if the child is yours, you boast just a wee bit about the joy in your baby's voice and the sunshine of his smile.

My! You feel strange when you have lost the power to smile. I am doing pretty well now, but a while ago a stroke of paralysis put the muscles of one side of my face out of business and I just couldn't smile. As I like to smile sometimes it did seem strange every time my eyes began to twinkle that the corners of my mouth should not act in sympathy with my eyes. One day, however, a little child after watching me intently, said: "Don't believe him. He doesn't mean it. Just see the twinkle in his eye!" It was a great comfort to feel that the eye can express the feelings of the soul when the face is unable to assist it very much; but it is a greater comfort to feel that both are in good working order and are fitting instruments wherewith the soul can work. I do not wonder that the American judge assessed the value of that laddie's smile at $20,000.

Is it not wonderful what power some smiles wield? A father last summer was telling me of the smartness of his baby, and then he asked: "Don't you think yourself that he has a very sweet smile?" What would you

think if a baby's father, a hardheaded business man, should ask you such a question? Would you seek the dark shades of opposition, even in July, just to remind the baby's dad that babies are much alike? Well, I didn't that time; for the baby has a sweet smile and his daddy knew it, and his aunties were ready to proclaim it. When his father, rather timidly enquired again, "But you do think he has a nice smile?" what was there left for me to do but gather up all the enthusiasm I had at hand just at that moment and put it into my voice, and declare without blinking an eye: "Of course, any one with half an eye can see that little Billy has a sweet smile?" I know that he will not agree with the American "smile" verdict, for I have a shrewd suspicion that he appraises little Billy's smile in terms which would rather stagger fathers of a dozen sturdy youngsters. Yet I do like to hear a man express his feelings regarding the little ones that call him "Father." A man that loves his children is generally a good man, and, more than that, the children love him. Don't you like to visit at such a house?

A smile is a commercial asset. A merchant once said to me: "I want a clerk. Do you know some young fellow you can honestly recommend?" I named one for whose honesty I could vouch, but he was such a gloomy soul that you might imagine that he had been brought up in a mountain region, where the clouds were always dark and not a few accompanied by thunderstorms. That young chap's face was his "misfortune" not his fortune, and the merchant just gave it one look. And yet there are some folks who declare

that it is nobody's business whether they look pleasant or not. They forget that it is their own, and that, when they stop smiling, they aid in making the community mournful, and as citizens they ought to endeavor to add to the happiness of their fellow-citizens.

"The English royal family has always been regarded with a great deal of enthusiasm and affection by the mass of the British people. What is the secret of it? I have sometimes wondered why, in these days of so much change, a reigning house should hold the hearts of the people so well, but I have been thinking that the members of the royal family are richly endowed in the matter of power to smile. The Prince of Wales possesses that power. One day, down in the Ancient Capital, he was driving through a section of the city which had been appropriated by the Irish. An old lady was out to behold the heir to the throne, and you know that, in these days, Irish folks are not particularly enthusiastic concerning kings and thrones and oaths of allegiance. That, however, does not eradicate the bump of curiosity that is a woman's peculiar possession. Well, this old lady was caught in a crowd, and could not see His Royal Highness. Somebody, however, noticed her disappointment and touched the Prince's arm at the time that the old lady's hopes seemed to be doomed, and he turned and gave that old woman a smile that will linger in her memory until her life goes out and, in the meantime, will transform her from an Irish Independent into an Irish Loyalist—at least you would think so to hear that old native of the Emerald Isle telling of our prince's kind heart and

desire to give joy to "a poor ould sowl that he didn't know at all, at all."

And do you know, I think that the sunshine in the face of Jesus captured the hearts of a good many people in His day. The children loved Him. That tells a wonderful story. And the women regarded Him as their friend. And the men thronged to listen to Him. I cannot help feeling that his face expressed something that folks long to see—human interest, sympathy, tenderness. I cannot explain the popularity of Jesus on any other ground, for the people in authority were all against him. And Christ's cause wins to-day, largely by reason of the personality of His followers. "Just let a little sunshine in" and soon you will let a little sunshine out, and men will glorify the Master.

III

"COME . . . AND REST A WHILE"

IS not that a good text for the Summer holidays? Those who are addicted to the vacation habit will find in it Divine approval of getting near enough to Nature's heart to rest a wee. Those who, like Keats, "hate the countrie's dirt and manners yet love the silence," will find in the appeal something which makes "the hum of human cities torture." There are times when the words of the Master are wonderfully welcome. We cannot keep on working indefinitely. Our activities must be punctuated by rests. I know just enough concerning music to appreciate the fact that the "rest" plays a greater part in making a composition effective than most folks realise. The Midsummer rest is something like that. In many cases it seems like a waste of good time, but it is not always so.

A Scotch elder, meeting a friend, was asked about his minister, and replied that he was off on vacation. The friend remarked that the last time he had seen the minister he was looking very fit. "Bless you," said the elder, "it wasna him that needit the vawcation. It was the congregation." Sometimes a change of voice is a good thing for the people; and sometimes a new note creeps into the sermon after the minister has had

a wee while with Nature and Nature's God. I like to hear somebody after service say in my hearing, "Isn't it good to see the minister back? And wasn't he fine this morning?" Then I know that the "vawcation" was not wasted on the minister, and that the congregation will get the benefit of these hours with Nature and with books in the months that stretch ahead.

But ministers are not the only folks who take vacations. Walk down the streets and you will be impressed that a few school teachers also are away in the country, by the lake side, or down by the sea. Yes, there are times when, in the midst of the uproar which the boisterous youth of the neighbourhood manages to create, you feel like addressing the absent pedagogues in the words of the old Scotch song, "Wull ye no come back again?" And I have a secret feeling that many a child would sometimes like fine to join in the chorus, for you can get too much of a good thing. That is why we have to have Daily Vacation Bible Schools—just to make the holidays endurable for the kiddies, and incidentally turn the time to good account.

A vacation is one of the best means known to impress upon the soul the blessing of work. No doubt you have heard of the old lady whose last words are said to have been:

"Farewell, my dear friends,
From you I must sever,
I'm goin' where I'll do nuthin'
Forever and ever."

Sometimes we think that a future like that might have not a few charms. But go off on vacation—is it not wonderful how soon we begin to grouch about how hard it is to put in the time? We say that a do-nothing life may be all right for some fellows, but it has no charms for the man who has a good job. Human nature is very peculiar—unhappy when it has plenty to do, wonderfully miserable when it has no work to face. Do you not think that our Lord said something very wise when He asked His disciples to come with Him into the wilderness and rest a while? He knew that they would not be satisfied very many days away from the abodes of men, but a rest would do them good. It would prepare them to enjoy their work much better; for a tired man has to whip himself to work, while a man in normal condition enjoys his work.

There are a few folks left in the world who labor under the delusion that work is a curse. It is not. Read your Bible and you will discover that work was the law of the universe long before there were pains and aches, and rheumatism, and mustard poultices and pain-killer. The first strike transformed work into labour, injected bitterness into toil, and converted glorious achievement into mere drudgery. Just think over the difference between work and labour and you will understand what I am driving at. It is not work that disheartens and kills. It is labour—work plus something that wearies the body, frets the spirit, and makes life a burden. If you want to learn what a blessing work is just go off on vacation. Soon you will learn

that just one thing is necessary to make you perfectly happy, and that is a little work.

The other day I read a story regarding an old stage-driver who had been very ill. In spite of careful nursing he did not gain much. One day his sons carried him out to the old stage, wrapped him up and put the lines into his feeble hands. It was simply wonderful how the old man galloped back to health. Yes, work is necessary to health. Perhaps Richard C. Cabot's points of a good job are worthy of capitulation: We want a chance to subdue. We want monotony and variety. We want a boss. We want to see the product of our work. We want a handle to our name—in other words, the recognition that the possession of a job should give. We want congeniality with our fellow-workmen. Yes. We all want work, and we want it very badly after the vacation is over, for we get tired doing nothing. We want to be busy.

Did it ever strike you that, amongst the famous "No Mores" of the Book of Revelation, you do not find "No more work?" You discover that there are no more tears, no more pain, no more death, but when the Seer would give us the crowning joy of the redeemed he says: "His servants shall serve Him, and they shall see His face and His name shall be written on their foreheads." Work will be the joy of heaven. That is why some of us are trying to discover all the good points of our task down here. We want to be fitted for the life which is beyond the shadows, but which we are assured is a life of activity and purposefulness.

IV

HOW MEN MAKE LIFE'S GREAT DECISION

ONE Summer afternoon, a good many years ago, a gentleman asked me to drive him out to a deserted church building. When we reached our destination we found the door unlocked; but the old house of worship was a sad sight—cobwebs hanging from the ceiling, all the windows smashed and one corner of the edifice hanging most precariously, for the supporting post had rotted away. My friend asked me to leave him for a while. So I tied the horse to the fence, and wandered in and out among the old tombstones in the churchyard, endeavouring to while away an hour by reading of the virtues of the good folks who had attended the church previous to Confederation.

When my friend came out of that ruined building there were tears upon his face, but there was also a great joy. He said: "I'm pretty dusty, for I have been sitting in the old pews where I was converted. I have been recalling the old faces. I have been thinking of the minister who used to preach here when I was a boy. Best of all, I have been living over again the night when I was converted in that old church—the night of all nights to me! I have been kneeling down amidst all that dust and trash just to thank God for the good men and women who worshipped here in my

youthful days, and for our old homespun preacher, who led me to the Saviour in my young manhood. To-day, on the very spot where I gave my heart to God forty years ago, I re-dedicated my life to the service of my Lord." Now this story was not told as connectedly as it appears here. It was punctuated by sobs. It was marked by flashes of great joy. When the story was finished I looked keenly at him, but he saw me not. He was living in other days, and, upon his face, was the look of one who has seen the Lord. I am not ashamed to say that my soul thrilled as I heard that man refer to the transcendent experience of his life.

There are church buildings which are very sacred to many individuals because of the associations connected therewith. I remember a congregation which had built a new house of worship and was about to move into it. The morning the new building was to be dedicated a lot of the old members held a seven o'clock prayer meeting in the old building. I am told that that farewell meeting could be described only in the words of the Psalmist: "Thy servants take pleasure in her stones and have pity on her dust." These old folks recalled the day when they knelt at the altar as penitents, or when, at that same altar, they were received into the membership of the church. The old building was dear to their hearts, and the new one could scarcely take its place.

But not every one is converted in a church building. "Where were you converted, Bill?" was asked of a brakeman one day. "Outside of Chicago, all alone,

on top of a freight car, at half-past two in the morning," was his surprising answer. God deals with the souls of men in diverse places and in diverse ways. Ever since my boyhood days I have been grappling with the problem of the differences which we find in Christian experience. I was brought up under Scotch Calvinistic teaching. When first we came to Canada we came into contact with Quietism as represented by the Quakers, and, soon after, with religious emotionalism as seen in Primitive Methodism. How they used to shout! A little band of "Primitives" in good form might, on a quiet night, be heard easily for over half a mile. And then from time to time there came to my father's manse religionists who seemed to make conversion a matter of the intellectual acceptance of a set of propositions. I heard one man say: "I can answer all the questions satisfactorily, but I know I need something more."

Faith is more than an intellectual attitude. It goes farther in than the brain. It has to do with the will. Conversion is the soul's return to God. It is the prodigal saying, "I will arise and go to my father." The prodigal arose and went, but the origin of his action lay in his will—in the purpose which he formed to go back home. Conversion is just like that. The will is the biggest human factor in it. Everything else is incidental. It was a long time before I could see that. I was waiting for something that God never gives to a man of my temperament—a highly wrought emotional experience. It was a wonderful hour to me when I acted upon the information given by the Apos-

tle John: "To as many as received him (Jesus Christ), to them gave He the right to become the children of God, even to them that believe on His name." I remember distinctly the day and the place where I told God that I honestly accepted Jesus as my Saviour. I regard the little prayer which I offered on that occasion as a very crude affair; but what it embodied is not crude. It is a soul's return to God, the will of the subject submitted to the King, the sinner conscious of his sin trusting the Divinely appointed Saviour. There was no great emotion about that crisis in my life; but there was a tremendous act of will in it—an act that has influenced me ever since. On that fateful day, in the words of Horace Bushnell, "One person a sinner committed himself to another person a Saviour." You ask "What about your feeling as the years have passed by?" Well, I am not afraid of God now. It seems natural to call him Father, and to desire to know His will for me; because somehow I have the feeling that I am His child; but I am anticipating something that I hope to say next week.

If the very core of the experience, which is popularly called conversion, be an act of will, we may expect that folks, in describing what has occurred, will view it from different standpoints. One of my friends, who loved to discuss this theme, once said to me: "The Lord loves variety. He never made two daisies just alike;" and I am inclined to think that no two individuals have exactly the same Christian experience. However, there are three main types of character with which the Christian worker has to deal.

To the man who has had all sorts of intellectual difficulties, his conversion stands out in his mind as the solution of his mental problems. But no man comes head first to the Saviour. He comes heart first. The deeply emotional soul and the steady-going individual in whom the will is dominant always—these form the great mass of the seekers after God. Let me tell of two brothers whom I knew. One was a quiet fellow, who had little to say for himself, but was evidently under deep conviction of sin. It was difficult to find out just what was his perplexity regarding the way of life. All his pastor could do was to show himself sympathetic with the silent struggles of a seeking soul and point out the way as best he could. At last a change came over his countenance. Relief was seen in his eyes. "It's settled!" he exclaimed, and the passing of years has proved that it was settled that night. Later on his younger brother was converted. He was completely broken down under a sense of his guilt. So great was his emotion that his minister could scarcely talk to him on account of his sobs; but when that lad made his decision his face was "as the clear shining after rain."

I have ventured to tell some of my own experiences in the hope that some of my readers may obtain help upon a problem which long puzzled me but which troubles me no longer. Once I am satisfied that conversion is a fact in any man's experience I do not trouble myself concerning the incidentals of that mighty transaction. He has met with his Saviour and mine, and we are "brethren in the Lord."

V

THE RELIGIOUS VALUE OF HUMOUR

THERE is a great difference between humour and frivolity. The latter is characterised by a lack of seriousness, sense and reverence. Humour is playful fancy. It depends for its effect rather upon kindly human feeling than on point and brilliancy of expression. It differs also from wit. Wit is abrupt, darting, scornful, and tosses its analogies in your face. Humour is slow and shy, insinuating its fun into your heart. Is there a place for humour in the religious life? I think that there is. It is not my purpose to defend the frivolous spirit which we so often behold in the religious life, nor shall I justify that wit which so frequently wounds the object of its attack; but I shall endeavour to establish the thesis that, in humour, religion has a very important asset. True, we must be careful that humour does not degenerate into frivolity, just as we must guard against seriousness drooping into dismal and depressing dreariness; yet a well-balanced soul will discover that a due proportion of humour in his nature makes a man easier to live with, and gives the religious worker a point of contact with a multitude of other souls, who thrill under the humanness of the man with the smile and the whimsical mode of address.

The Religious Value of Humour

Humour is a wonderful antidote to the pessimistic attitude towards life. I suppose that we have to-day a special outbreak of pessimism, for all sorts of hidden forces have come to the surface, and we are often astounded at the glimpses that we get of human restlessness and human sin. When a solemn-faced pessimist comes along it is always well to remember that we have been hearing for a great while that the world is going to the dogs just as fast as it can. I have heard it for a good many years now, but, on the whole, things are better than they were when I was a boy. It is easy to point to certain things which might be improved, but that is a very different thing from declaring that the world is deteriorating altogether. Here is a wee bit of verse that will cheer you:

"My grandpa notes the world's worn cogs,
And says we're going to the dogs;
His granddad, in his house of logs,
Swore things were going to the dogs;
His dad, amid the Flemish bogs,
Vowed things were going to the dogs;
The cave man, in his queer skin togs,
Said things were going to the dogs.
But this is what I wish to state:
The dogs have had an awful wait."

The best argument against pessimism is a kindly religious humour. It cannot face it. As a friend of mine used to say: "It rushes away to hide its diminished head."

Humour is also a great asset in religious teaching. I wonder why it is that so many preachers are afraid

of it. Is it part of their inheritance of black coats and dim religious light, and music in the minor key, and an over-emphasis upon death as the chief experience which the individual must face? A little while ago, a Scottish preacher came down to London, where he preached a sermon that won him fame. His text was hackneyed; it gave little promise of being the seed from which a great sermon might grow, for his audience thought that the last word had been said upon it. Here is the text: "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation, etc." The minister looked down into the faces of a crowd of old sermon-tasters, and said very quietly: "I think Paul had some Scottish characteristics in his make-up. Like most Scots he was given to an understatement rather than to an overstatement. When a Scot is asked how he is he usually replies, 'I'm no sae bad,' or 'I micht be waur,' meaning, of course, that he is in very good health. When Paul said 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel,' he actually meant 'I am proud of it.'" Can you not fancy that you see that congregation of London Scottish with an appreciative gleam in their eyes and just a wee hint of a smile on their lips, bending forward to get the next sentence? The preacher had captured them by the pawkiness of his humour. They will never forget that explanation, but it was the humour in it that gave it point.

Did you ever think that, while we are very apt to regard Jesus as the Man of Sorrows, there are indications that He was not devoid of humour? Read the Sermon on the Mount, and picture to yourself the

man with a saw-log in his own eye trying to discover the splinter in his neighbour's eye, or the grapes growing upon a thorn-bush, or figs upon a thistle, and then just ask yourself if a kindly, genial humour might not be a characteristic of the Great Teacher. I suppose that you have noticed that very often a great orator, when he has lifted the people by his matchless word-painting and his appeals to the very highest in human nature, will, at the close of one of his flights of eloquence, tell a story or make a humorous remark. Now, what does he do that for? Well, just to let down the strain. Just to get ready for another ascent. As I study the Sermon on the Mount, I see indications that Jesus was not unacquainted with the fact that the mind finds continuous attention to high themes very difficult, and needs the genial ministry of humour to assist it in contemplating the great problems of human life and destiny.

I cannot help remarking that a modicum of humour is absolutely necessary to enable the preacher to steer clear of trying situations for the congregation. In a certain Ontario church of the old-fashioned style of architecture, a little dwarf of a preacher appeared one Sabbath morning—that is, a little tuft of black hair showed itself above the pulpit cushions. A voice issued from the midst of that ancient piece of furniture, and this is what it said: "Noo we'll begin the worship o' Almichty God by singin' Psalm yin hundred and thirty, 'O Lord, frae the depths to Thee I cried.'" That congregation, in spite of its Presbyterian training in regard to merriment in the house of God, had too

great a strain put upon its powers of endurance, and it simply rocked with laughter. Now, would not a little sense of humour in that preacher have saved the dignity of the situation? I fancy many of my readers can recall instances where the "saving salt of humour" would have been a great blessing.

And what charm a little humour gives to religious conversation. Why is it that ministers are often avoided by the male members of the family when pastoral visitation is in progress? Is it not because the man with the dog-collar has the reputation of being more concerned with the affairs of heaven than with the things that are of interest to the inhabitants of earth? Many stories are told of the dislike of some men to meet the parson. One of the latest I heard is that a man who was lying sick in the ward, was discovered by some social service workers in rather a destitute condition. Thinking that his own church might desire to do something to relieve the distress in the home, they enquired as to his church preference and, when they discovered it, asked if they should notify the minister. The sick man roused himself sufficiently to emphatically declare: "Gosh, I'm not sick enough for that yet." Would not a little humour in the parson help to keep his feet on the earth, and break down the barriers that have been erected between him and the masses? Men like to meet manly men, and the possession of a little humour offers a means of approach to many a soul that otherwise can not be reached.

There is something to be said respecting the value of

humour to its possessor. There are some men—and a few women—who take the experiences of life very hard. Now I am not saying that some experiences are not hard; but it is possible to get into that frame of mind where a little bunch of feathers feels like a ton weight. The mind that is expecting trouble generally gets it; and, as continual use of our powers develops them in a wonderful fashion, the trouble-seekers usually are astonished at the length and breadth and depth of their discoveries. Then you have a narrow-souled groucher who makes himself a nuisance to everybody, or a broken-hearted pilgrim who has scarcely courage for the rest of the journey, and who would like to lie down and die right away. But a sense of humour helps a man over many a hard place. The infirmities of age often weigh heavily upon the soul. An old preacher, who had a very long and sharp nose and a very long chin, was told by a friend: "Doctor, I am afraid your nose and your chin will fight before long. They approach each other very menacingly." Had he been thin-skinned, he would have brooded over that speech as an insulting reference to his decaying powers, but he did not. He just remarked: "Very true. A great many words have passed between them already." Now that preacher had a healthy soul.

I have said enough to make it clear that humour is a decidedly distinct aid to religion,—yes, that it will enable a man to regard the trials of life from an angle that assists the religious spirit in eliminating dreariness and substituting therefor the hopeful and

genial. And how much we need such an outlook in these days of world unrest and world sorrow! God has placed within our souls the power of humour for the purpose of letting off the strain sometimes, for He knows how tired human hearts become. Do not worry because you can smile. Just thank God that there are times when you simply must smile. For humour is the gift of the Father in Heaven.

VI

THE REALITY OF REGENERATION

THE phone has just rung, and I have been speaking with a man, who, a few weeks ago, called upon me regarding a matter of business, but who, through a chance word, led me to a discussion of the relation of the human soul to the Lord Jesus Christ. The result of that talk was that that man went home to settle matters with his Lord, and he has been telling me regarding the satisfaction that life holds for him since he made the great decision. He could not have believed that it made such a difference. Life is so much sweeter. There is a new motive behind it. There is new power for daily living. There is a definite assurance of reward at the end of the journey. He is living in an atmosphere of wonders; he is discovering glorious things, since he and his Lord have come into fellowship. It has struck me that there are many people, who really want to know whether there is anything in conversion, whether any great change takes place when the human soul is given over to God—in short, whether the thing, that our fathers used to insist upon as the one condition of entrance into Heaven, is an experience worth while.

We are not concerned here with the peculiar methods which some sects use in getting men into the Kingdom. Some of them are very objectionable to sensi-

tive souls. Nor are we troubled regarding the varieties of Christian experience. We are aware that there are some folks that are anxious to put everybody through the same little cheese-press squeezed out into exactly the same shape. God has many methods of dealing with the soul of man. The thing which we are discussing is the reality of regeneration, the new life as a fact that has to be reckoned with, the new birth an experience that surpasses all others.

Science is teaching us to go back to facts, and there is one evidence for Christianity that is always to be reckoned with, and that is a Christian. A good many of us become impatient with the arguments adduced for churches of a certain faith, we can make a fairly good argument, too, against claims that the Bible is of supreme authority, but a Christian, a strong, saintly, unselfish character—that has to be explained; and, when he tells that the secret of his life lies in the fact of a great experience, we face a living argument, and that is the most convincing argument of all.

The testimony of the religious consciousness is that conversion is a reality, regeneration a wonderful supernatural change. The New Testament is full of the records of conversion. The most interesting of them all is probably that of the Apostle Paul. We are not discussing here the experiences which he describes. It is sufficient to remind you that he says: "It was the good pleasure of God to reveal His Son in me." The man, who before was a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious, obtained mercy, and the enemy of Christianity became its apostle. Now this was a tremendous

spiritual experience. It was the origin and explanation of everything that followed. The New Testament bears witness to the fact that there were very many others in apostolic times who had a wonderful experience of the supernatural in their lives. If any man is in Christ—so reads the record—for him all life has become new. The soul passes into a new kingdom, and owes allegiance to a new lord; it is delivered out of the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of the Son of God's love; it is no longer subject to the lusts of man, but to the will of God. Nay, more than that, if any man be in Christ, he is passed from death unto life, from the death of sin to the life of righteousness; he is born again, begotten of God, he is a new creature, old things have passed away; behold they are become new. Now there is an atmosphere of candour and reality in the New Testament. We cannot dismiss these statements as mere poetry or rhetoric. It is the speech of men in contact with reality. They speak what they do know and testify what they have seen. If we are to be fair, we must take this testimony into account, when we judge the reality of the thing that is called conversion.

Then we must not forget that since the day of the Apostles there have been hundreds and thousands, who make the very same claims as are recorded in the New Testament respecting the reality of the Divine dealing with the souls of men. I do not need to mention the names of great saints and reformers, although I might easily fill my little corner with a list of men and women of whom the world was not worthy, but

every one of whom tells of a definite experience of a spiritual change. I need only remind you that a wave of emotion passes over the average congregation when the hymn is sung, "O happy day that fixed my choice on Thee, my Saviour and my God." There is a response to that hymn that is eloquent of the reality of the fact that God does deal with the human soul, pardoning sin and making all things new, so that we may well speak of the new birth.

But the most eloquent testimony regarding the reality of this experience is the changed life that results therefrom. If a man becomes "a new creature," and other people see that he is a new creature, nothing more need be said. Now it can easily be seen that this evidence is found most readily amongst the "down and outers," and so we go to the mission workers, to the Salvation Army, to the men and women whose life work is amongst those who have lost hope, and self-respect, and are considered mere burdens upon society, and often a disgrace to humanity. We ask, "Is there anything in conversion?" Mr. Davis, of the Yonge Street Mission, can tell you a story that will make your heart sing for joy, for he has seen God at work renewing manhood, and taking feet out of the miry clay and placing them upon the Rock. Every Salvation Army officer will respond, "Anything in conversion? Why, bless the Lord, that is the greatest fact of all!" And you will be deluged with stories regarding what they have seen with their eyes, and heard with their ears respecting what God has done in individual cases. Yet we must not forget that conver-

sion means a great deal even to a respectable sinner. It means handing over the control of his life to Jesus Christ, and there will necessarily be the destruction of selfishness, there will be an enthusiasm for righteousness, there will be devotion to Christ as his Saviour and Master. Conversion is the crisis from which all other moral experiences are dated.

There are sham conversions. There are people who are very susceptible to religious appeal. It is, in their case, a very short step from the strongest religious emotion to the strongest animal passion; and these people have led a good many who wish to be very sure regarding their own action, to be careful respecting the claims they make as to their relation to Jesus Christ. There are whole communities that have been burnt over by a flame of revivalism that has left many an individual nothing but a warning to others of the danger of mere religious emotionalism. But true conversion is not a mere emotional experience. It is a moral decision. It is an intelligent turning away from the old life of sin, a deliberate choice of Jesus Christ as Saviour and Master, a committal of the soul into His keeping for time and for eternity. Regeneration is the Divine act which follows conversion. Just what God does we cannot tell, but any man who has experienced the change knows that something has been done, and that he is now a new creature in Christ Jesus. Regeneration is a mystery, but it is likewise a great reality. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth, so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

VII

LOOKING FOR TO-MORROW MORNING

WE need the hopeful heart. We use the minor note too much. True, we have our hard times. The sorrows of the war have been very real. The hardships occasioned by the high cost of living have borne heavily upon many a family. Not a few people seem to think that the world is on the verge of destruction. It is the easiest thing under heaven to be a pessimist just now. But you know that generally the thing that is not easy is the thing that is right. An old lady said once that a certain course of action must be her duty, "because," she said, "I hate it so much."

Well, that is one reason why I make an attempt at being an optimist. I could be a howling success as a pessimist, especially when my liver is not working very well or when the rheumatism pinches me a little more than usual. It requires real effort, however, to be a fairly respectable optimist upon such days. I may be mistaken, but I am of the opinion that it is a bigger achievement to have my name away down at the foot of the pass list in the optimistic class than to get first-class honours and medal in the other competition. I have no desire to attain notoriety as a first-class pessimist.

Perhaps that is why a little passage in the Book of

Numbers appeals very strongly to me. Israel was on the march. Their route lay through a flat, uninteresting country. Night had fallen. The old chronicler records the story thus: "Israel was much discouraged." They appeared to be turning their faces away from the Land of Promise. But the chronicler introduces a phrase that lights up the darkness with real glory. "They pitched . . . in the wilderness . . . toward the sunrising." I suppose that is the Oriental way of saying that they were traveling East; but it does not require a very vivid Western imagination to see, in the tent opening toward the sunrising, a face looking for to-morrow morning—looking out in the direction from which the light ought to come.

There is something very fascinating about such an attitude of mind. The man, who, in the dark, pitches his tent toward the sunrising, may have to endure all sorts of jeering, may have little evidence to produce that light will come from the East—all he knows is that it should come from that direction. It has come from that point of the compass in the days gone by. So he pitches the little V-shaped tent where the first ray of the morning sun will flood it with light, and lies down to rest in the darkness, but looking for to-morrow morning. Isn't that a fine, brave spirit?

Somewhere the sun is shining,
Somewhere the song-birds dwell;
Hush, then, thy sad repining,
God lives and all is well.

When a man shows such a spirit as that he cheers other folks up. There are some souls who affect you

as does a chilly, dark day. If you are feeling blue, they intensify the feeling. If you are quite normal, they manage to make you feel that "this world's a wilderness of woe." But the man who has the cheery spirit comes into office or store like a beam of sunshine bringing cheer and health with him. We love such a man as that and hope that his tribe may increase.

But you object that this is rather a strenuous demand that some poor sinners should become optimists. You say: "You know I just naturally am inclined to look on the dark side of things." Well, when I was a wee laddie, there were some things that I just naturally did too; but, when I did them, there was a big slipper wielded by a vigorous hand to remind me that some things that were so easily done brought woe to the doer thereof and general unhappiness to the family. No man can give way to pessimism without intensifying his own misery and making other folks miserable, too. The cheerful spirit is a religious duty. I heard a man once say regarding another that his religion did not seem to agree with him, because he had such a melancholy face and such a doleful manner. I saw somewhere the other day that a famous American statesman, who was taken to task for his dislike to a certain man, gave as his reason that he did not like his face. The reply was that the man was not responsible for his face; and the reply came: "Nonsense! Every man of forty-five is responsible for his face." Think it over, and you will see that what he meant is that the character of the man has been stamped upon his countenance by his daily life. So if you want to have a

face that folks like to look at, be cheerful. Pitch your tent toward the sunrising. It is not always easy to do it. The East wind is piercing, especially when the darkness is closing down. We do not care to lie in a V-shaped tent open to the cold, damp breeze. Oh! When the darkness seems thick enough to cut with a knife, it takes grit to watch for the sunrise. But isn't such watching character-making?

And do you know, it seems to me that there is an expression in one of the Pauline epistles which gives us a little sidelight upon the optimistic spirit: "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope in the power of the Holy Ghost." Just think of God as the hopeful God, never daunted by the darkness, always looking towards the sunrising. Paul prays that God may fill the Roman Christians with all joy and peace in believing. Evidently he regards the cheerful spirit as the mark of a follower of Christ, and as a special gift given to those whose faith issues in joy and peace. The optimistic soul believes, rejoices, rests and hopes in God. He knows that, in spite of to-night's darkness, to-morrow morning will bring sunshine once more. Something of that wondrous hope, which saw, in a poor degraded sinner, a saint made like unto Jesus Christ, comes into his heart. And the God who can do that for a sin-stained soul can do anything. That is the basis of his optimism.

"I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,
And in His word do I hope.
My soul looketh for the Lord,

More than watchmen look for the morning;
O Israel, hope in the Lord;
For with the Lord there is mercy,
And with him is plenteous redemption.
And He shall redeem Israel
From all his iniquities."

VIII

SOME THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

THOUGHT precedes speech. If you do not believe that, ask any mother who possesses an intelligent baby, and she will tell you about the remarkable thoughts that she is sure find a place in her baby's mind; or ask the owner of a good dog, and he will speak of the eloquent eyes of his canine friend, and the thoughts which must lie behind them. Consult a work on psychology, and you will be assured that thought always precedes language; and, if then you are not quite certain, recall some time when you were requested to talk upon a certain subject and declined upon the ground that you had nothing to say, for you had not thought sufficiently concerning the question.

Clear and intelligent speech springs from a clear and well-informed mind. There are some folks whose conversation is most disappointing. These people look well, dress well, and often possess cultured voices, but their mental assets are very limited indeed. In our block there is a parrot. He is the finest looking bird on the street, but, as the children say, his voice is "fierce," and his conversation strictly limited to the vain repetition of "Polly," and an occasional wrathful outburst which terminates in the exclamation, "Get out!" He is a standing advertisement of the fact that

fine feathers do not always make fine birds. Although his education has gone on for at least three years, he cannot possess a very receptive mind, for he has learned but little. Speech is generally an indication of the thoughts that possess the soul. "As a man thinketh in his heart so is he." It is chiefly through speech and action that we learn the real quality of the man, and, of these two, speech plays the more frequent part.

One day a good many years ago, Mr. Thomas Bone, who for many years, was missionary on the Welland Canal, approached a group of swearing men with that cheery smile which made him the friend of every "sailor man." "Good-morning, boys," he said, "can any of you tell me just what kind of stuff that mill is grinding without going to look into the hopper?" Nobody could, and one man asked him, "Mr. Bone, can you?" "Yes," he said, "I'd watch what comes out at the spout." There was a general laugh and then the wise old missionary remarked: "Judging by what has been coming out of the spout, there must be some pretty bad stuff in the hopper." The story is applicable to others than sailors; for by our words we are justified and by our words we are condemned.

The other night I saw a four-year-old lying flat on his stomach upon the sidewalk, studying the progress of "Bringing Up Father." Judging from his merry laughter over father's adventures, one could be in no doubt of his appreciation of the pictures, but mere merriment is not the chief end to be sought when food that is worthy of thought is provided for childish intelligence. We must be careful as to the character of

the subjects upon which we think. What kind of ideals will that child obtain by a study of "Bringing Up Father?"

There hangs in my bedroom a card upon which is printed an extract from an old author. It reads as follows:

"Whatsoever things are TRUE,
Whatsoever things are HONEST,
Whatsoever things are JUST,
Whatsoever things are PURE,
Whatsoever things are LOVELY,
Whatsoever things are of GOOD REPORT.
If there be any virtue, and if there be any praise
Think on these things."

I believe that that quotation dates back about nineteen hundred years, but it is just as applicable to-day as it was when it was first written. It is the soul which has some worthy things to think about that possesses something worth while talking about.

I have not been very well lately, and one of my visitors—a lady—suggested to me that that card of mine ought to be hung up in many reception rooms at five o'clock teas, "for," said she, "a great many ladies retail a good deal of scandal at such gatherings. They need good wholesome teaching." I think I could point out some gatherings not frequented by women where the teaching enforced by my little card might prove corrective. It is well to remember that the soul, who is continually pondering worthy thoughts, will soon lose his fondness for that which is inane, trivial, contemptible and positively wicked. Meet some pure help-

ful soul. Endeavour to discover the secret of his invariable charitable references to others. Ask yourself why you always have a kindlier feeling towards your fellow-men after you have been in his presence for a little while. I fancy that you will discover that your friend is not anxious to hear anything discreditable concerning his neighbours. He is a reader of good books. He meditates upon worthy things. He rejoices over noble deeds, high and inspiring thought, and his words prove it. Sam Walter Foss well sings:

"Let me live in my house by the side of the road,
where the race of men go by—
They are good, they are bad, they are weak, they are
strong,
Wise, foolish—so am I.
Then why should I sit in the scorner's seat
Or hurl the cynic's ban?—
Let me live in my house by the side of the road, and
be a friend to man."

One of the glories of the virtuous women, according to King Solomon, is that "She openeth her mouth with wisdom and the law of kindness is on her tongue." All the good women did not die in those far-off times. Some of them remain to bless, encourage and inspire the poor sinners who live at the present day. What a benison some people are! No scandal drops from their lips. They are not given to gossip. Their language is never suggestive of uncleanness or obscenity. It is like a brook—clear, sparkling, refreshing, life-giving—a perfect benediction to all their friends. Such people seem to have made the old

adage their motto: "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise."

IX

THE CHRISTIAN SPIRIT

THE manifestation of a Christian spirit has always been a hard trial to me. In my earliest school days I had trouble over it; for, on the very first day of my attendance, some tough young rascal picked upon my father's son, just because he happened to be a minister's laddie, and, after throwing doubt upon the character of his ancestral tree, challenged him to fight. Well, the laddie was between two fires—a desire to smite the Philistine's hip and thigh, and another desire to obey the parental injunction: "Thou shalt not fight." He chose not to fight, but had to stand the jeers of the Philistines regarding his forebears, who had fought on many a battlefield with the Royal Scots Regiment. He went home crying, "Mither, I've jist got tae fecht." And the next day the battle came off, and Scotland was not vanquished either; but a lady came complaining to the minister concerning the vicious and unchristian spirit manifested by his eldest son, who had hit her son Willie on the nose, thereby causing him serious loss of blood, and, what was more serious a grave loss of respect for the Christian ministry. That day I began to wrestle with the problem, what is "The Christian Spirit." I learned that some folks, when they interpret what it should be in some

other folks, might very well sum it up in one word, "spiritless."

During my college days, I had, as a professor, one of the gentlest and godliest men I ever knew; but, one day, the class was electrified at hearing him address one of the students in language that was fairly blistering in its indignation. He had caught a glimpse of the fellow cheating during recitation, and his indignation burst forth in a fashion that made us marvel, for it revealed a strength and virility in his nature, which hitherto had not been disclosed. One of the students afterwards, in discussing the incident, said: "The Old Prof. made me think of the Lord this afternoon. Oh, how the Old Man hates sneaking!" But afterwards, it became clear that the offending student did not think that the professor had exhibited a very Christian spirit. The rest of the class admired the professor more than ever. What is your verdict concerning his spirit? It may help you, in coming to a decision, to be told that the offence was long-continued, and that the student was taking advantage of the fact that the professor was very short-sighted.

I have related these incidents just to emphasise the fact that there are differences of opinion regarding what constitutes the Christian spirit. Some people would make it a colourless negative thing. They would rob it of virility and strength and leave the Christian "an easy mark" for every one who chooses to impose on him. I confess that I do not read my Bible in that fashion. There are days when I like to read of Jesus driving the traders out of the Temple, and other days

when I like to read the twenty-third of Matthew, in which He makes that terrific attack upon the Pharisees; for the Christ I adore is a strong character. I do not like being imposed upon myself, and I should find it hard to follow One whose life showed that He had not sufficient self-respect to resent insult and injustice both to Himself and others. My Christ is no weakling.

It is when I try to relate my life to His that I get into trouble. I rub my hands in delight, when I see these miserable note-shavers on the run out of the Temple porches. I smile as I hear Him address the Pharisees over and over again as "hypocrites." I love the strength that is manifest everywhere in His character, and I want to be like Him. I hear Paul saying: "Be ye angry," and I feel like hugging the bleary-eyed old Apostle; but he goes on to say further: "and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath," and then I feel like exclaiming: "Oh, Paul! Paul! You've spoiled it. It's clear you're no Scotch, or you wud never say that." And then there floats through my mind the words, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ," and I begin to feel something of the authority of the Master in the words of the servant, and to realise that righteous indignation must be handled like dynamite, "with great care."

Many years ago a famous English preacher wrote a tract, which had a tremendous circulation, and, some years afterwards, got into a controversy with a gentleman against whom he wrote another tract. He carried it to a friend to have him suggest a title for it.

This is what he suggested: "Go to the Devil, by the author of 'Come to Jesus.'" Needless to say the manuscript was never published. There is no time, when a man needs more to pray for Divine grace than when he is righteously indignant clear to his toes; for it is possible to exhibit a devilish temper over a heavenly matter.

No doubt you have been impressed with the overflowing good-will of Jesus toward unfriendly people. We have all admired the attitude of Joseph towards his brethren, who sold him as a slave into Egypt; but Jesus makes what was only an occasional virtue the common duty of everyday life. That is where the demand that we show the Christian spirit catches most of us. In some high hour of magnanimity, we do forgive somebody who has wronged us; and, afterwards, while we may not publish the fact abroad, we do like to sit down with little Jack Horner, and think "What a good boy am I!" It takes the conceit out of us just to read the Master's demands as recorded in the sixth chapter of Luke: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, bless them that curse you, pray for them that despitefully use you." A little reflection upon His example will lead an earnest soul to feel that he comes far short of attaining the standard that the Master has set up. Did you ever hear of folks, who said to somebody that had offended them: "Well, I'll forgive you, but I never can forget it?" And their sins had been cast behind God's back—cast into the depths of the sea! And God demands that they forgive even as He for Christ's sake forgives them. The

Christmas season is a good time to get rid of old grudges and to extend the hand of genuine friendship.

And compassion—yes, I had not forgotten that, but I have been writing about some things that are often overloaded. The Christian spirit is a spirit of sympathy and compassion. That is why hospitals and all sorts of charities abound wherever the Gospel is preached. That is why the Christian peoples are seeking to help the starving millions of North China. That is why, wherever a man professes to be a follower of the Nazarene, we look to him to supplement his profession by his deeds, and to show that he has a feeling of brotherliness towards others who need his help.

I have just been reading of an old man, an invalid, whose son had to carry the burden of the homestead. One day the son asked the father to do some little chores, but the old man was weary, and his memory was failing, and he forgot. When the son got home he enquired about the chores and his father said, "Son, I am sorry to own it, but really I forgot." The son choked down his anger and said: "Never mind, father, I'll attend to them," and was turning to go to the barn, when the father called to him, and this is what he said: "Oh, my boy, God bless you, just because you are always so faithful to duty! You will never know what a comfort you are to me, you are so faithful, my son, to duty!" When the son returned from doing the chores, and addressed the poor old man in the deep arm chair, there was no response; and, in a moment or two, he discovered that, out of the weariness and

pain, the tired old father had gone to that land where "there shall be no more pain." The sweetest memory that son cherishes of his father are these words: "God bless you, my boy! You are such a comfort to me, because you are always so faithful to duty." And that is the kind of spirit which is inculcated by the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

X

"AS THY DAYS SO SHALL THY STRENGTH BE"

A GOOD many years ago when I was a wee laddie, an old backwoods preacher visited my father, and, as is the custom of preachers, they began to discuss sermons. He said that a man, situated as he was, laboured under a handicap. He tried to do too much. "I don't get around to some of my appointments for a month. I tell you, Brother, that a sermon has plenty of time to soak in. Every sermon I preach is a double-barrelled one. I try to instruct and comfort the saints of the Lord, and then I always git after the sinners down by the door; and, you can jest bet, I'm stronger on the Gospel than I am on exposition." When I set out to write this chapter I decided that like the old preacher's sermon it would have to be double-barrelled; for we are on the very confines of the Old Year and can almost descry the borders of the New.

Here is a strong, helpful text which ought to sing in your hearts as the days go by. I am giving it to you in time to have it make melody in your soul while the bells, and whistles, and bands, and men and women singers, announce that another year is born: "Thy bars shall be iron and brass, and as thy days so shall thy strength be." There are many wonderful things in the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, and some ex-

pressions which have been heartening to Bible readers in the days gone by; but I do not know a single expression that has done so much to steady souls as they had to face a new and difficult experience as the quiet little assurance: "As thy days so shall thy strength be." I like to read the context: "There is none like unto thy God, O Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heavens for thy help, and, in his excellency, upon the skies. The eternal God is thy dwelling place and underneath are the everlasting arms."

William L. Stidger, in the New York Christian Advocate, tells a story which I desire to repeat that my readers may get a little inspiration which comes from it. He was travelling in China with another American, who was as fussy over a certain woollen blanket as any old hen with only one chick possibly could be. But one day the old chap told the story of the blanket. It had been given to him by his boy, and he did not want to lose it. He said that one day, when the lad was about seven years of age, he was out with some other kiddies and was run over by a train, and both legs were crushed. The father was called to the hospital, and taken to the operating room, and there saw the surgeons do their ghastly work. When the laddie came out of the anæsthetic, it was with a cry on his lips: "Oh, daddy, I've been run over with a train. How could the doctor fix me up so soon? Daddy, he must have cut my legs off?" The boy was asking a question. That was the hardest hour in that man's life. Then he said to him: "Sonny boy—you have always been brave—and daddy has never told you

a lie, and he isn't going to begin now—and you have guessed it right. The doctor did take off both your legs."

Then the little chap raised his little white arm in the air, and looked at it, and then into his father's face, and said: "But this arm is still all right, daddy." And then he raised the other one, and cried, almost with a note of triumph in his childish tone: "And this one, too, daddy. My legs may be gone, but my arms are all right, Daddy!" The man continued: "The man who comforted me most was not our preacher, and I am a good Churchman. It was not any of the Church members. It was the banker with whom I do business. He had heard about my boy's raising his arms and saying: 'But I have still these left, daddy. They are all right still,' and wanted to know if it were true, and I told him the story; and then he took me by the hand, and said something that was more comforting than anybody in the whole town had said to me. He said: 'Mitchell, the lad hasn't lost his nerve, and that's worth a thousand legs!' "

Now, why did I tell you that story? First, because it appeals to me, and, second, because I want to impress upon the circle of readers who "meditate" that it is the spirit with which we face a new experience, which is one of the greatest determining factors in its solution. Now just let our little motto sing in your soul: "As thy days so shall thy strength be." If there is anything that will give a man courage to face an experience which he dreads, it is a promise like that. We face a new year, and there are many things which, we

feel may be very trying in store for us and for the nation to which we belong; but it is well to remind ourselves:

"His love in time past forbids me to think
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink."

His dealing in the past, and His promise for the days to come should give us steadfastness of soul.

As I think over the terms of that promise, I fancy that it is more than a general pledge. You have to deal with it like an account at the bank. You have to "cheque" it out. You get the strength for the special day. Some of my readers can look back upon certain experiences, and say, "Often I wonder how I got through that at all."

A great peace fills their hearts as they begin to discern the Divine care for them. The strength proved sufficient for the day. All kinds of days, bright days and dull ones, active days and inactive ones, days when the Saviour's presence is most cheering, and other days when the Tempter shoots his fiery darts at the soul and wounds it sorely, days when business is good and other days when everything seems to go wrong; days when the body is tortured with pain and other days when the joy of life appears to surge in the veins —"As thy days so shall thy strength be."

Isn't it a restful thing just to feel that the strength is given in view of our immediate need? Did you ever look up at your doctor and say, "How long, Doctor, must I lie here?" and have the answer come, "Only a day at a time." It is easier to live a day at a time. If

some of us knew just what the future holds for us, we should soon be discouraged. But a day at a time, and strength for the day—that, as the Scots say, is a "different proposeetion."

"Just for to-day, whatever betide,
Clasp our hands closer, walk by our side:
Safe in Thy keeping, naught can affright.
Following Jesus, darkness is light.
Just for to-day, just for to-day,
Guide us and keep us, just for to-day."

XI

FORGIVING ONE ANOTHER

IS forgiveness a virtue or a weakness? Some folks do not care to give a verdict. They admit that, in many cases, forgiveness is very beautiful, but are apt also to declare that they admire such a precious jewel chiefly when it appears as an ornament in a queen's crown. It is hardly amongst the moral excellences which they deem suitable to a strong positive nature. Hence, when they hear of some good man who "has not an enemy in the world," they wonder why he wears a kilt when a petticoat would much more appropriately advertise his pacific disposition. The fact is the average man regards a readiness to forgive offences as an indication of a weak character.

An examination of any dictionary of quotations will convince the reader that the subject of forgiveness has not been popular with the writers who have made literature. Like some other subjects, it has been relegated to the pulpit. The fact that the central truth of the preacher's message is the Divine forgiveness, leads a great many souls to regard him as effeminate, otherwise he would not glory in such a message; and the further fact that he repeats his Master's command to His followers makes them sure that he is a weakling—"Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you,

bless them that curse you, and pray for them that despitefully use you." The average man in his serious moments has "a deal o' tribble wi' that order."

There is a story handed down by tradition regarding an old Highland chief who was about to depart into the land of shadows. He had been a famous fighter in his day, and had carried on many a quarrel that his father or his grandfather had begun. His spiritual adviser was summoned and told him that an appropriate preparation for the great change would be the forgiving of any one who had injured him. The old chief was surprised, but he knew that he was dying and wanted to be sure of his future; and so he asked: "Must Tonal forgive her?" And the answer came: "Yes. The Good Book says so." "Well, Tonal forgives her." Then the man of God spoke of a clan quarrel, which had been exceedingly bitter, and which seemed to grow more bitter as the years went by. He told the dying chief that he must forgive the chief of that other clan. The old man sat straight up on his couch—his indignation was so great. "Must Tonal do that?"—he almost screamed. "Yes," was the quiet but firm answer. The old chief dropped back upon his bed saying, "Tonal will forgive her; but Angus, my son, your father's curse be on you if you forgive her." That story may or may not be true, but it is so in accord with what we have seen in human nature that it has a certain degree of probability. That feud had existed for many years. It probably had been handed down from father to son; yet that old man, while hoping for the mercy of a Holy God, was providing

that that ancient quarrel should be perpetuated after he was gone.

Now in view of that wee story and of some other things, let us just meditate upon the fifth petition of the Model Prayer. "Forgive us our trespasses for we forgive those who trespass against us." Do we? Can we really use our forgiveness of our enemies as an argument with God? "Oh, now," you say, "isn't there another reading of that petition?" Yes, there is, but I do not think that you will like it any better. Here it is: "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us." How do we forgive? Grudgingly, with the memory of the offence ever before us, without giving the offender the same confidence as before—isn't it simply an awful prayer when we ask for forgiveness in the same measure as we forgive our enemies?

Do you remember the story which Jesus tells regarding the man who was forgiven by his king of a debt of some twenty-five millions of dollars? He has a debtor who owes him about sixteen dollars, and, forgetful of his own treatment by the king, he takes the poor wretch by the throat, saying: "Pay me that thou owest." And when the debtor pleads as he did to his king, "Have patience with me and I will pay thee all," he casts the poor chap into prison. Do you remember what happened to that hard-hearted creditor? The king had him arrested until he should pay his own enormous indebtedness—a hopeless undertaking. And Jesus concludes the story, "So shall also my Heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his

brother from your hearts." (Matt. 18: 35.) I confess that, whenever I meditate upon that Model Prayer and think of the fifth petition, it shakes my soul. I can quite understand the disciples, when they first heard it, crying in dismay, "Lord, increase our faith"; because forgiving power grows as we cling to the Crucified.

But I have often marvelled at the command to do good to those that hate us. On the surface it would seem to be impossible of fulfilment. Yet the Lord is very wise. He knows that deep down in the human soul there is a real sympathy for the other fellow, and, when he would kindle the flame of love for an enemy in his adversary's heart, he appeals to his most generous instincts first. "If thine enemy hunger feed him; if he thirst give him drink." Pity is declared to be akin to love. No man who has done a deed of kindness for one whom he has reason to regard as his enemy ever feels so bitterly towards him again. Do you believe that? Just read "Red Pepper's Patients." Ponder the enmity between the red-headed doctor and Van Horn, his greatest rival—"the man who has fought me by politely sneering at me, and circumventing me when he could ever since I began my practice, and whom I have fought in my own way." Read how Van Horn fell ill, and Burns was called upon to operate upon his ancient enemy. What a change that made! How all the generosity potential in that impetuous nature seemed to manifest itself immediately!

After three days spent continuously at the sick man's bedside, Burns runs home for a brief rest and greets

his wife thus: "The game's worth the candle, Len!" "Even though you have been burning the candle at both ends, dear? Yes, I know it is. I'm so glad—so glad." "We're sworn friends, Van and I. Can you believe it? Len, he's simply the finest ever." I have read and re-read that page again and again and marvelled at the wisdom of the Master Who, twenty centuries ago, taught His disciples, "If thine enemy hunger feed him." He saw that an unselfish deed releases springs that will leap out of the soul to bless humanity, and, in the very act of blessing the enemy, will sweeten the whole nature of the giver.

How can you qualify to offer the fifth petition of the Model Prayer, so searching in its character? Do a deed of kindness to your enemy. Repeat it until it becomes a habit. Perhaps then love will begin to glow in your heart. It is worth trying. But one thing is certain that, if we are to be happy with a holy God throughout eternity, we need some moral training down here; and hatred of one's enemies does not afford it. I wonder whether earnest prayer and effort to overcome our hatreds might not help us to be more fit for heaven, and, what is of more concern to many people, more fit to live with here? That also is worth trying.

XII

MY FRIEND, THE MINISTER

THERE are some folks who know very little concerning ministers. They started to protest against their unjustifiable interference with their personal comfort at the time when they were christened, and they have kept it up ever since. There are other folks who regard the minister as a sort of harmless idealist, who lives so much in another world that he is a safe individual upon whom to bestow hand-me-down clothes and other relics of bygone days. There are many who pity him, for his income does not compare with that of other professional men who have spent the same number of years in preparation as he. And there are not a few who despise him, for they are very apt to estimate his intellectual worth according to its monetary value. But my friend, the minister, is in a class all by himself, and is well worth knowing.

Did you ever stop to think that a larger percentage of the great scholars of the world come from the manse than from any other class in the country? Professional men, statesmen and scholars are frequently the product of these homes. When you judge the clerical profession by the second generation you will discover that in brain-power the ministry is quite able to hold

its own. Once in a while I hear of some individual who has been admitted to the sacred office in spite of a strange lack of intellectual qualifications for the cure of souls. I always think of what an Irishman told me in respect of a bull-frog that attempted to swim across the Atlantic. "Av coorse he wint to the bottom." But the ministry as a class are as liberally furnished with grey matter as the rest of humanity, and in many cases, the minister would be an ornament to any of the learned professions.

But my friend, the minister, possesses qualities of soul which compel consideration. I have a fairly wide acquaintance with ministers and Roman Catholic priests, and, while I have met a few shysters amongst them, I think that I can honestly say that the vast majority of them possess the altruistic spirit in large measure. There is only one other profession that can compare with the ministry in respect of self-sacrifice for the sake of humanity, and that is the medical one. My friend, the minister, has learned the duty and the joy of sacrificing himself for the sake of others. A selfish minister is a sort of curiosity. He is so rare that, when he does appear, his meanness seems abnormal in spite of the fact that it might be duplicated by that of the man who lives next door to the manse. We expect a minister to be kind and considerate, and generous. That is why we used to pass all the tramps on to the manse, and, when we ourselves started out to collect for any charity, we tackled the minister first, for we felt sure that he was in sympathy with every good cause. My friend, the minister, is an easy mark

for the unscrupulous; but I like him because of his love for and his faith in his fellow-men.

And my friend, the minister, is generally a man whom you can trust. The kiddies like him, and when the children like a man you may be sure that he is a good man, especially if the kiddies' mothers say: "I like that minister. He has such a good face." A woman can tell you more about a man's real worth than can the confidential report of any commercial agency or the investigating committee of any secret society. When a woman says that a man has a good face the last word has been said. When she declares that she does not like a man, you had better be careful about trusting him. Well, to get back to the minister. Who holds more family secrets than the minister?

To whom does the poor fellow in trouble go more frequently than to the minister? The stranger in a strange city has always one that he counts a friend, and that is the ill-paid minister who has a heart big enough to feel another's woes.

I have known my friend, the minister, to travel the streets going from factory to factory all day long, just because he wanted to get a job for a stranger who was "dead-broke"; and, when at last he was successful, to be as glad about it as if he had received a legacy from a Scotch uncle who, while generous at death, had been thrifty in his lifetime thereby making the legacy the more attractive. I have known him to give his last dollar to keep a poor family from starving. I have known him to sit up all night with the sick and dying.

If you have a boy in a town far way from home,

and you are anxious concerning his manner of life, to whom do you write asking him to take an interest in the laddie? Why, of course, nobody can do it quite so well as my friend, the minister. When your daughter needs advice respecting life in a strange city, the minister is a fount of information, and incidentally can write a letter of introduction. When you discover that he is travelling to some city in which your laddie dwells, you feel that perhaps he might take a few minutes just to call on Jack. And the minister promises, spoils half a day, squanders his nickels in street-car fares, two each way, comes back with the sense of duty well done singing in his soul, in spite of the fact that the extra expenditure led him to sacrifice his lunch. I wonder if you forgot to give him the car-fare.

Who can help you over a hard place in life so well as my friend, the minister? He seems to have an instinct that leads him to understand the soul's difficulties. And, when he is puzzled, have you ever noticed that he says: "Let us kneel down and ask Divine guidance about this?" After prayer you often feel that somehow the difficulty has been solved. He has brought you face to face with God, and God's will has suddenly become clear to you.

I have seen him settling family difficulties—you see my father was a minister—with an arm about a sobbing young wife, who carried the baby in her arms and the other arm round a sulky young husband. I have heard him talk to them like a Dutch uncle. And then I have heard him pray while he held the little family

close to him. And I tell you that prayer made one listener understand the solemnity and the glory of the marriage state. And I have seen him deliberately walk right out of the room saying to the quarrelling pair: "Now settle things between you; but remember that God is sorry about your differences." And when he came back the room was filled with glory like the clear shining after rain. I have seen him pointing souls to Calvary. He delighted in that. I have heard him say to a visitor: "Well, what can I do for you?" And the answer would come tremblingly: "Can you tell me what I must do to be saved?" And there would be a strange glad note in the minister's voice: "Of course I can. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. Now, I'll tell you just how Jesus saved me." And the minister would go back to the day when the Spirit of God revealed to him his sin, tell of the awful burden that lay upon his heart during these anxious days, and then describe how at length he saw that Christ took his place on the Cross, suffered in his behalf, and that all he had to do was to trust the Living One Who died but is risen again. "Trust him as you do the doctor, when you are lying on the operating table. Trust him as the baby trusts the mother when she jumps into the outstretched arms." And when the minister was asked, "Is that all?" he would say, "That is all I did, and He saved me." And after pondering the wondrous news a moment, I have heard the visitor say: "Well, if you found salvation by doing that I guess that it is safe to risk it." And there was joy in the presence of the angels that night, and a

whole cage of singing birds were let loose in the minister's soul.

I should like to tell you about my friend, the minister, in the sick-room. When everybody is afraid to tell the patient that he is dying, we send for the minister. And when folks have neglected God all their lives, they send for him to "prepare them to die." And my friend comes to stand between the dying sinner and the holy God. His message centres about the Cross and the Sin-Bearer, and many a family has reason to thank God for the story of forgiveness proclaimed by the man of God who had himself learned the way to Calvary. And when the bodies of our dead are laid away, it is the big heart and the sympathetic voice of my friend, the minister, that makes the sympathy of Jesus more real to the sorrowful soul, for he has caught something of his Master's spirit. God bless him, and may his tribe increase.

XIII

THE MINISTER'S WIFE

THE minister is back from his holidays, so the newspapers tell us. They add that he has benefited greatly by his vacation, and even announce the subjects upon which he will preach as he enters upon the season's work. But they say nothing concerning the manse lady. That is just how she has been treated since the days of the Apostles. Did it ever strike you that, although we know the names of a good many preachers in the early Christian Church, we seldom hear of their wives? For example, we read that St. Peter "led about a sister a wife," but we do not know any more about her. An old lady, whom I once met, thought that the famous apostle must have suffered from dyspepsia and got along best on his wife's cooking, and so Mrs. Peter went with him on all his journeys. Now, that is hardly the view which a great multitude of folks hold respecting Peter, but it is worthy of consideration. There is no doubt, of course, that he was a married man.

An examination of the evidence would go to show that Paul, too, was a benedict. In speaking of the trial of the Christians in Jerusalem, he says, "I gave my voice against them," and competent scholars have interpreted these words as showing that he was a mem-

ber of the Jewish Sanhedrin, one of the qualifications for membership in that body being that the candidate must be married. Yet, while we hear much regarding the Apostle to the Gentiles, we hear nothing of Mrs. Paul; and so some authorities have come to the conclusion that, at the time of his conversion to Christianity, he was a widower. In a famous passage in the first letter to the Corinthians, he refers to his wifeless condition, but says that "the rest of the Apostles and the brethren of the Lord and Peter" are married. Perhaps the shadow of a great domestic sorrow lay heavy upon his soul. It may be that he thought that a wanderer like himself could do better service if he were untrammelled by domestic ties. We know absolutely nothing about it. All we know is that he asserted his right to marry if he chose. Some parsons have to do the same thing to-day.

The right to marry is one thing; the wisdom of marrying under certain circumstances is quite another. Many a parson has had to face the fact that he has little to offer the woman whom he loves except partnership in a life of Christian service. It speaks volumes for the lady of the manse that she did not turn down the preacher because he was poor. It is proof that she counts some things as better than gold. Where will you find a more unselfish class of women than those who make the manses, parsonages, and rectories of this country little bits of heaven, first for the minister, and afterwards for anybody who is fortunate enough to get a glimpse of a real Christian home? There are exceptions, of course. I am not claiming

that all manse ladies are wearing angels' wings; but I do think that the angels are often glad because of the kindly deeds of the average lady of the manse. I think too that her husband, in his prayers, thanks God for the wee woman who shares his poverty and his joys. The fact is the manse lady is an unusual woman. You see she did not marry the minister with her eyes shut. From afar she saw his proposal coming. She had to consider carefully, and pray about it; and, when she said "Yes," I think the angels were happy, for they knew that she was vowed to companionship with a man whose calling was likely to develop the noblest and most unselfish qualities of her nature.

However, the manse lady did not marry an angel. By that I mean to say that the minister is very human. There are times when his people are apt to think that he is so heavenly that all that he would have to do is just to lift his wings and soar away. That is when he is having a glorious time preaching. The manse lady sees him when the reaction has come and he is exhausted physically, mentally, and spiritually, and when, as I heard one preacher say, he is acting "like the devil." Yet she never tells. "The minister is not very well to-day. You will excuse him, I know. Have you any message that I could give him?" The caller goes away impressed with the fact that if the minister is ill he has a wonderfully pleasant nurse. About that time her husband rises up and calls her blessed.

How interested she is in the affairs of the congregation! Somebody says: "She ought to be. She is the minister's wife." I reply: "Yes. A true wife will

be interested in her husband's work; but when the minister was called to the pastorate, his wife received no call." It was a case of "married man preferred," because it was hoped that the lady of the manse might act as an assistant pastor. Now that is not fair to the manse lady. The Lord knows, and we know, that the minister is a better and happier man because she is in charge of the manse; but I do not see that she is under any greater obligation to visit all the homes in the parish than is any other lady in the congregation. Her first duty is to her husband and her home. Some folks need to have that fact rubbed deep into their consciousness. Not a few ministers' wives have been worn out prematurely because of the enormous demands made upon their time and strength by people who were better physically to undertake some tasks than they were.

I do think, however, that we have a right to expect the minister's wife to be a woman of prayer. I cannot understand how she can get any relief from her anxiety concerning her husband and his work if she has not learned the secret of casting the burden upon the Lord. And the prayer life reacts upon character. Yes, as a rule, the manse lady is a godly woman. Often her sweet, womanly face shows it. She moves about the parish, a silent blessing to many a soul.

The manse lady is generally a mother. "The minister aye has a sma' steepend an' mony bairns"—so an old Scot told me; and he was not far astray. Even if she have no children, the manse lady as a rule has the motherly heart. That is why the young folks trust

her. Often they tell her things which they would not dream of telling their own mothers, and could not by any stretch of imagination be expected to tell the minister. There are in every congregation young men and women, who have reason to thank God for the loving, motherly interest and quiet, sensible advice of the mistress of the manse. But what often stays longest in the memory is the little prayer she offered one night, when a lady, or perhaps it was a lassie, went to see her. That prayer was so direct that it seemed to the listener that God was very near; and that the manse lady had done much to help the troubled heart by putting the whole case before the Lord.

The words of King Lemuel are appropriate to the minister's wife: "The heart of her husband trusteth in her. She doeth him good and not evil all the days of her life." And other people trust her and she does them good. Eternity alone will reveal how much we owe to the little, frequently ignored mistress of the manse.

XIV

HAVE FAITH IN YOUR FELLOW-MEN

WHEN I was a little lad I was afflicted with fever and ague. I remember how the cold chills used to run down my spinal column, to be succeeded by the shakes and finally by the fever; and I cannot help comparing the sensations I experienced in the days of long ago with those which I have in these days, when some of my acquaintances begin to talk about the unreliability, meanness and general cussedness of human nature. If I were to believe all that I hear, I should be afraid to trust anybody, I should regard humanity as being on the down-grade, and should be listening for the fiendish laughter of the pit which announces the collapse of virtue and the triumph of evil. However, am not revelling in any such mournful contemplations. Frankly, I am an optimist. There are many things in other folks that I do not like any too well, but then there are a good many things in myself that might be considerably improved. Consequently, as the years go by, I believe that I am becoming more charitable in my judgments and more ready to discount public rumour respecting some who are regarded as sinners above many. I fancy that many a man is ready to condemn his fellows because he has an exaggerated sense of his own goodness, or because he has had one

unfortunate experience and leaps to the conclusion that humanity is made up of individuals who are ready to take advantage of him. "You can't trust anybody," he says. I have met some sour old maids and some crabbed old bachelors who said that very same thing, but it does not carry any weight with happy married folks like you and me. The fact is that the percentage of trustworthy people is a good deal higher than the average pessimist will admit; and it might be a great deal higher still if faith in our fellowman were regarded as one of the foundation stones of honour, and honesty, and kindness.

I have been re-reading a book by Harold Begbie, entitled "Twice-Born Men." It contains a number of studies of conversion amongst the submerged and criminal classes in Old London. One of these sketches deals with a man who started his prison career at nine years of age, and who, in his young manhood, was a thorough-going criminal. Through the influence of a prison companion who had reformed he came into touch with the Salvation Army, and there occurred in his experience one of those marvellous changes which can be explained only upon the assumption that God intervenes to aid the sinner. "What happened nobody knows. Joe himself is unable to explain. He knelt there and prayed. He rose feeling that he had sufficient strength to make a fight for a clean life. He was honest with the woman whom he asked to marry him. He says that he felt himself quite free from the net of crimes. The thing that most impressed me in the story was the fact that this poor crime-stained soul,

in the midst of his rejoicings over the Divine forgiveness, longed for some good woman who would trust him, love him and share his life with him. His prayers for a wife were answered one day. He told her about his hateful past, told of his wonderful deliverance, of his prayer to God for a wife, said that he could not help asking her but could not expect that she would marry him, for he might drift back and be what he was. But she married him, and the Divine love and trust and a good woman's love and trust brought heaven into that poor sinner's heart, and his acquaintances marvelled at the strength of character which he developed. There is nothing that nerves a man to do his best like the assurance that God cares and another human heart cares, and that they trust him to the very limit.

I have been pondering over the evil that is wrought so often by the suspicious attitude which so many people assume towards others. There are mechanics who never do their best when a certain foreman is about, because he has a nose for trouble. There are some clerks to whom the presence of "the boss" is like a frost that withers everything it touches. There are moneyed men who take the heart out of honest hard-working neighbours, because they treat them like rascals rather than as men. There are parents who never coax the best out of their children because they never trust them, and then they wonder why the kiddies develop so much deception. There are married folks who do not trust each other, and yet marvel that they are not happy. It is an absolute fact that the measure

of your faith in the other fellow is the measure of the loyalty and service which he will return to you. "With whatsoever measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."

Some years ago I read of a man in a certain village who had a very fine orchard. The previous owner had had trouble with the village boys, and declared that they would steal everything in sight. He had chased them out with dog and gun, but the boys seemed to be unscareable. The new owner put up a sign: "Boys, come in and have an apple. The best tree in the orchard is reserved for you." Do you think there was any stealing after that? If you do you do not understand boy-nature. The apple owner was the boys' friend. He trusted them, and they were ready to defend his property. That story emphasises the point which I am trying to make.

But somebody rises to object that you dare not trust everybody. You must be careful whom you trust. Well, now, I wonder which is the more Christian principle to go on: "Treat every man as a rogue until you prove him to be an honest man" or "Treat every man as an honest man until you have proved him otherwise." I wonder which principle gives the best returns in the long run. What Jesus thinks about it is worthy of consideration. There is nothing that leads me to adore Him more than the fact that He is so ready to trust men, that we should be ready to condemn right off the bat as utterly unworthy of confidence. Recall the story of Peter the Fisherman, who denied his Lord with oaths and curses, and after the

Resurrection was sought out by the Master in the ever-memorable message: "Go tell my disciples and Peter." Why "and Peter?" Don't you feel the thrill of it? Does your heart not glow over the magnanimity of it? I always like to ponder the scene a few days later when, at the Sea of Galilee, the Lord asked His discredited follower if he loved Him, and, when He had received an affirmative answer, told him to tend His lambs. Read the twenty-first chapter of John's Gospel, and you will be impressed with the fact that our Lord trusted the very man that you and I would condemn as cowardly, ungrateful, unreliable.

But did he make good? Was our Lord's faith in Him justified? Read the story of Peter's life. Imagine the scene on the Day of Pentecost, when this one-time coward suddenly developed into a mighty defender of the new faith. Read the tradition of his martyrdom at Rome—crucified head downwards because he considered himself to be unworthy to die like his Master; and then ponder the question whether our Lord does not get the best results from human nature by His readiness to trust even such a weakling as could not endure the sneer of a slip of a girl. And would it not be worth-while asking if the same sort of treatment might not be worthy of a good, fair trial in our dealings with our fellow-men?

XV

THE SOUL'S OUTLOOK

I HAVE been buying spectacles. It is not the first time that I have done such a thing; but this time I have done something that is noteworthy—I have come back from the opticians possessed of a pair of glasses perfectly circular in form, bound in tortoise shell, possessed of ear lugs, and so generally prosperous in appearance that I can scarcely recognise myself as I look into the mirror. But I can see, and that is the purpose for which we purchase glasses.

It is the most natural thing in the world that I should be meditating upon the soul's outlook. These new glasses of mine have suggested the subject. It is wonderful how a new pair of lenses will affect your outlook upon life. I am told that some people would not be so pessimistic if only they would expend a little money for the correction of their sight; for poor eyesight is at the back of not a few physical and mental ills which afflict the sons and daughters of men. Be that as it may, it is a most important thing to have a cheerful outlook.

Robert Louis Stevenson, that cheerful and brave invalid who fought for his life while he wrote his books, once expressed the hope that his view of the outside world might not be coloured by the medicine bottles

upon his shelf. There is a time in our lives when we like to look through the druggist's window. Do you not remember, when, as a wee laddie, you watched the evening shadows lengthen, and peered through the window out into the street until you could announce with triumph, "Oh, Mother! I see the big, green bottle now!" The light had just been turned on in the apothecary's window, and the big bottle shone out in all its glory. Since that day you may have reason to dislike the sign of the green bottle, for it reminds you of many a day of sickness and suffering for you and your loved ones. Now you are apt to wonder how a druggist can be cheerful, and especially how he can advertise his cheerfulness by means of the big glass bottles which shine so brightly by day and night. If you were choosing the colour for the medicineman's window decoration, you would choose a deep indigo, and thereby you would make the drug store less attractive to the young and more in accordance with your own feelings regarding the drug business.

Perhaps the reason that so many druggists are so sunny in disposition is that they look over or around their big coloured bottles and not through them. Have you ever thought that a great many folks are always looking upon life through medicine bottles? Haven't you been tempted to think that the nasty bitter taste of the compound contained in the said highly coloured glass holders has found a place upon their tongues, and has influenced all their language? Do you know folks who always have "a tale of woe to tell you?" Nice people to meet, are they not? I wonder if you ever

gaze upon the world through the medicine bottle? Do ills and disappointments of life sour you, and make you hard to live with? Sometimes little honest self-examination is good for the soul. It is like wiping one's glasses. It gives us a clearer outlook. I wonder whether we do not sometimes look upon the "good luck" of some other fellow through the green bottle of envy. And, when bereavement comes, do we not often gaze through the indigo bottle in the sure conviction that that is exactly the shade for the sorrowful soul? It is a good thing just to remember that the coloured bottle is an artificial barrier interposed between us and the sunshine. And God's sun still shines.

Do you remember when as a child you had to find grandfather's glasses? It was quite a chore, for grandfather had two pairs—his "near-bys" and "fur-offs," and they were very apt to get mixed. And do you know that I think a good many people are continually mixing their spectacles to-day? They wear their "near-bys" all the time, when it would do them good just to wear their "fur-offs" occasionally. My minister told a story last Sunday concerning a woman who for some mysterious reason was losing her sight. She lived in a narrow street. If she looked out of the front window she gazed into a blank brick wall. If she looked out of the back window things were little better. If she climbed to the second story she could still gaze upon the dull monotony of city housing. "But," said the doctor, "have you not a third story?" "Yes," said the patient. "Then climb up there, and look out over the tops of the houses, away over the city smoke and dust,

away to the hills—you must have something to relieve the eye-strain." And so that woman used to climb up two flights of stair each day just to get a glimpse of the far-away hills.

I do not think that I heard very much more of the sermon, for my mind was at work. I was thinking of the days of my boyhood, the time when I committed to memory the one hundred and twenty-first Psalm in the Scots version, and of the comfort that Psalm has been to me ever since:

"I to the hills will lift mine eyes
From whence doth come mine aid;
My safety cometh from the Lord
Who heaven and earth hath made."

Many a time have I looked upon the mountains, the everlasting hills, and never do they fail to bring to my mind the thought of God's greatness, nearness, quietness and strength. Perhaps I am peculiarly susceptible to the beauty of nature, and that that is the reason that my soul responds to the message which she proclaims so wonderfully. One thing I do know—the soul must have an outlook. She cannot remain day after day, and year after year, gazing simply at dull duty, heavy burdens, bitter sorrows. She must get a sight of the heavenly hills touched with the golden sunlight. Eternal truth, righteousness, justice, abounding love and mercy—these are the mountain peaks she loves to view.

One beautiful day I was coming away from the Terrace which looks down over the harbour of Quebec.

My soul was thrilled by the wonder of the vision spread before our eyes. An American visitor said to me: "Ain't it lovely? The folks that always live here ought to be good." Alas! He forgot that physical beauty does not always produce moral results upon the beholder, and that some spectators have no eye for the beautiful. Yet no one can get a glimpse of the eternal hills regularly without having his life affected by the vision. That is why the family altar should be kept up and church attendance be regular. We need to lift our eyes to "the hills from whence cometh our help."

XVI

PAIN AND ITS COMPENSATIONS

THE problem of pain is a very ancient one. It looms up in the Book of Genesis. It occupies the middle of the stage in the Book of Job. In the Prophecy of Isaiah the suffering servant of Jehovah claims our attention; and in the New Testament we have to face the fact that salvation for the individual is closely related to the suffering of the Great Substitute. When our Lord was about His work, He was asked concerning a blind man: "Lord, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" That question is an indication that the lesson of the Book of Job had not taken hold of the Jewish mind, but that multitudes of people still believed that all suffering is a sure proof that the sufferer is being punished for his own wrong-doing or the wrong-doing of others. Jesus in His reply shattered that theory: "Neither did this man sin nor his parent; but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Often suffering is a consequence of sin; but it is not always a sure proof that the sufferer is being punished for his personal wrong-doing. When you get that clearly in your mind, you have gone some distance towards a solution of the problem. Why do good people suffer? It is not always because of their personal wrong-doing.

There is much suffering in the world that is very mysterious. Even the individual who talks very learnedly concerning the law of heredity and who can trace a great deal of suffering to a violation of the laws of nature, is often compelled to admit that some cases of suffering are so inscrutable that he cannot throw the least light upon them. He simply does not know. When a man comes to the end of his knowledge and admits it, we respect him; but most of us have a hearty dislike for the know-it-all. The most disagreeable specimen of this class is the man who can explain the secret of his neighbour's troubles, *e. g.,* why he lost his money, why his wife or child died, why he has been laid aside through illness, in fact every trying experience which the poor fellow next door has to face. These, he explains, are all judgments of the Lord upon him because of his sins. However, when the same Mr. Know-it-all has to pass through similar experiences, he regards them not as judgments, but as trials. His favourite religious poem is the thirty-fourth paraphrase.

> "The troubles which afflict the just
> In number many be."

How that same Mr. Know-it-all walks rough-shod over many a sensitive soul does not need to be repeated here. He does exactly what "the unco guid freens o' Job" did long ago. He slanders both the sufferer and his God.

Instead of endeavouring to explain the mystery of

suffering, I am writing respecting a few of its compensations. Did it ever strike you that suffering often comes to a soul to open his eyes to the good qualities in other people. You smile and say, "That is not much compensation for severe and terrible experiences." Is it not? Character-making is a very slow process. Some qualities develop much more slowly than others. Self-appreciation is of mushroom growth. Altruism is like the oak. It requires years and storms to bring it to its maturity. Whose soul is more beautiful than his, who is appreciative of others? Whose more disagreeable than that of him whose list of likeable people is significantly short? But, when the day of weakness and pain comes, have you not seen many a sufferer becoming wonderfully appreciative of the kindness done to him? How often you have seen the tears start to the eye as he was told of some one's goodness to him. Yes, the beautiful flower of altruism, love for our fellow-men, is often grown in hearts that are broken and torn through pain and suffering.

And then, you are aware, of course, that many a soul would not realise the sympathy of the Saviour were it not for his experience of pain. It is an unspeakable help to the soul just to think that Christ suffered pain in order to help us in our hours of suffering. One night, while I was tossing restlessly upon my bed in the hospital, I began to think of the relation of Jesus Christ to suffering. I thought of His prayer in Gethsemane, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." My soul began to feel as never before

what suffering meant to the Son of God. Then I recalled the words of the writer to the Hebrews, in that wonderful chapter, which tells of Jesus crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death, that, by the grace of God, He should taste death for every man. In that lonely hour, I saw that Jesus, by the very fact of his suffering, is linked in a very special fashion with humanity; and, somehow, the pain was easier to bear, because I had called to mind the old truth that He had a real human experience, and that

> "Our Fellow-Sufferer still retains
> A fellow-feeling of our pains."

Others, no doubt, have been helped, as I was, through meditation upon the sufferings of the Saviour.

Pain sometimes opens the door to a very gracious ministry. When you have fathomed the depths of pain or sorrow yourself you can minister more efficiently to souls distressed. That is why, under certain circumstances, you prefer a minister of mature years to visit a patient. He is more likely to understand, and, therefore, to sympathise with one who is facing the problems of pain and sorrow.

Did you ever hear that Dr. George Mathieson's great hymn, "O love that will not let me go," was written out of a heart that was wounded and bleeding? As I recall the story, the author lost his sight in a hunting accident, and his betrothed jilted him on account of his blindness. "Not much compensation for pain there," you say. But listen to the words that have cheered many a sore heart:

"O joy, that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee;
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain
That morn shall tearless be."

The Apostle Paul wrote many centuries ago: "Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Some folks have interpreted these words as implying that all pain's compensations come to us in the future life; but others have found that an earnest of the future glory is often received by the sufferer during his life here, and that that earnest is wonderfully sweet and blessed. Much depends upon the attitude we take towards pain—is it a trial or a means of grace?

XVII

THE MESSAGE OF "THE ANGELUS"

ONE of the most popular of the modern paintings is by a Belgian artist, Millet, "The Angelus." The scene which it depicts is a very homely one, and at first sight very commonplace—a potato field and two figures, a man and a woman, surrounded by the implements of their toil. It is a dull, bleak landscape, and away across the level tract you see a village with the church spire rising above the lowly roofs. It is evening and the bell has rung out its call to prayer. Its silvery chime has reached the ears of the two labourers, and after the devout manner of their country, they have hearkened to its call. They have dropped their tools, and they are standing erect, with bowed heads and folded hands, in the attitude of prayer. The late Professor Henry Drummond used to say that that picture suggests the three elements of a complete life. The field, the spade, the basket and the barrow—there is work; the bowed heads and the folded hands—there is religion; the two, a man and a woman, whatever be their relationship—there is love. If any one of these be lacking, a life is incomplete.

Work is the foundation of life. It is a necessity. It is a sacred thing. Now that appears to be saying a good deal. Whatever view you may take respecting the authorship of the Book of Genesis, you must admit

that the writer of that famous old document is very wise when he represents the first man not as a loafer, but as a worker. There have always been a few persons who have regarded work as a curse rather than as a blessing; but we are learning to-day that physical, intellectual, and spiritual health depend upon it. That is the verdict of medical men at any rate, and who have a better right than they to speak of the blessings of work. They know far better than any groucher the evil of overwork, and often order patients to take a rest; but any physician will tell you that work is absolutely necessary to physical health. I have known farmers to retire from the farm because they had reached what is considered old age, or because one of the boys had married, and was suggesting to the old man that he have a chance to see if he could make the farm go. And in order that the farm might go, the old man had to go, and he took up his abode in town or village; and soon the "vittals" lost their good taste, and the liver got slow, and the old man couldn't understand why he was feeling so miserable with not a blessed thing to do. But haying came on, and he went out to the old farm to help Bill for a few days, and the liver resumed its old tone, and the old man could stow away vittals enough to make "Ma" turn pale whenever she thought of "Pa's" poor liver. But she needn't have worried. Pa was suffering like many another man because he hadn't enough to do, and when he got a job, the blood in his veins began to sing "Glory, Glory Hallelujah," instead of "I should like to die, said Willie."

Every normal individual wants a chance to subdue. Man was created in order that he might overcome nature. That old Belgian picture is a continual reminder of the difficulties overcome by the dwellers in that land by the North Sea. What a story it tells of how the sea has been dammed back by artificial embankments; how barren sand has become fertile through heavy spade labour and generous manuring; how, in the region between the Scheldt and the Meuse, where the farms average only five acres in size, the greatest sacrifice has been necessary to create and maintain fertile fields! Look at the picture once more and rejoice that man, aided by the simplest tools, can overcome and subdue nature. Here was no soft job. It is still hard enough. But the same indomitable spirit that conquered the sea has shown that it can stand firm against a powerful and blustering foe that threatened the national life of the people.

There is joy in good hard work. I am aware that this statement will be criticised by some of my readers, but I am putting it down here after carefully thinking it over. What does a man mean when he says to his physician: "Doctor, I have lost my ambition"? That fellow might deny that he loves his job, he might be too bashful to declare that he gets much satisfaction out of it, but when he loses his ambition he becomes alarmed and hies away to a medico, thereby acknowledging that work is absolutely necessary to any real joy in life. I am not speaking of the little chap whose chest swells with pride because he has got his first job, nor of the fellow who loves to wear the livery of toil

even if he knows none of its sorrows—I am speaking of men who understand how the burdens chafe the shoulders and the difficulties fret the spirit. These are the men who become anxious when they lose their ambition. Then the secret joy departs from life, and they wake up to the fact that even in drudgery there is blessing.

Millet's picture suggests also that love is a very important factor in a normal life. Belgium is a country whose inhabitants are for the most part toilers. I have noticed that poverty usually presses home upon the consciousness of the burden-bearer the need of sympathy. If you read the words of the Glorified One in the Book of Revelation, you will find that it is the church that is rich and increased in goods that says that she has need of nothing. And you will discover, if you do a little quiet observation, that the old bachelors are not numerous amongst the toilers, but find congenial company amongst the well-to-do. Youthful marriages seem to be the normal state of things in working communities. While some of them are failures, I believe that when young people struggle together out of poverty into independence they have greater love for each other than couples who have begun their married lives with no financial difficulties to overcome. Be that as it may, love is the very making of the individual. The character is sweetened and brightened, it becomes capable of sacrifices that were never dreamed of in the old days; yes, it achieves, for the sake of love, the noblest and the best.

And work and love need to be supplemented by re-

ligion. Work without love is drudgery, work and love without religion tragedy. Into the lives filled with labour and blessed with love must come the sound of "The Angelus," the call to prayer, the reminder that God ought to have a place in our lives. In too many cases work or love seem to crowd God out. The drudgery of toil, the preciousness of affection combine to lead people to forget God. Let me tell you of a case that came under my notice. The man was past middle life and had been a most successful toiler. He knew all about the joy there is in overcoming nature. He had experienced the satisfaction of beholding the reward of his toil, for he was fairly wealthy. Into his life there came a woman much younger than himself, and he loved her. That heart, that had found its greatest joy in subduing mountains and bridging rivers, was roused to the fact that there was something more satisfying. He longed for her affection. One day he discovered that she loved him. It was almost unbelievable. The man went about with a new look in his face and a new tone in his voice, and his friends said, "What has happened to Jim?" One day old Jim married and they were wondrously happy. They thought that they could never be happier—but a baby came. What bliss! Jim and his wife just knew that nobody ever had experienced anything like it. They exulted in their love. They rejoiced in the tenderness and mystery of parentage. Months passed by and baby took ill, and slowly faded before their eyes. When he passed away, a sympathetic neighbour asked the stricken father who was his minister. He answered

that they had none. "I was too busy in my younger days to take much interest in religion. Lately I have been so happy that I have forgotten all about church." "Let me call a minister," said the caller. "I shall be most grateful if you do." And the man of God came into that stricken home. His sympathetic hand-clasp, his loving look at the waxen baby-face, his tear-filled eye as he said, "My baby-boy was much like him; he also has gone to be with the Good Shepherd; I wonder if the two babies have become friends yet?" drew the hearts of Jim and Bessie to him. He talked in the most natural fashion about the Father, and the Father's House, and the Saviour, and his words fell into good soil. And then he took out a little book and said, "Let me read what the Bible says about children." And when he had read a little, he began to talk to God as if He were a very dear friend, and Jim and Bess felt the awful pain go out of their hearts. They longed with a great longing to feel the love of the Heavenly Father who loved their baby; and, in that hour, two hearts were given to the Saviour and two lives devoted to His service, and an awful sorrow did not darken into a tragedy. They have another baby now, and every Sunday you may hear him crowing with delight as his father walks up the aisle to lift the offering.

XVIII

WORRY

THERE are some folks who are past-masters in the art of worrying. If they have nothing to worry about they will invent something, and what they invent will possess more terrors than anything that has substance, and form and reality. If they were without something to worry about, they would worry because they were free from care, and would think that they were heading straight for the asylum. In fact David Harum's famous remark might very well be adapted and applied to them. "A certain amount of fleas is good for a dog. It keeps him from brooding on being a dog." And these good people appear to think that a certain amount of worry is necessary to ward off some greater evil.

What a trial the man with the double chin and the cheery laugh is to the fellow who is continually worrying. He regards that chin as an insult to himself. What business has any fellow to sport a double chin when the world is in such a serious state? What right has any fellow to go about with a twinkle in his eye when there is so much sorrow in the earth? This is a time for weeping, not for joking. I heard of one of these sad-faced saints, who was pouring out his soul in grievous lamentations at a religious meeting. He had

brought down the temperature of the gathering until it was like a dull chilly March day. You could feel the weather in your very bones. After the good man had resumed his seat, another man, one with a rubicund countenance, and an expansive smile, took the floor, and in a few minutes the whole meeting was convulsed with laughter. Then the modern successor to Jeremiah rose to his feet, and, in solemn tones, exclaimed, "Brethren, we should not be giving way to undue levity in this fashion. We should be weeping over our sins." At once the cheerful idiot proposed that the doleful brother lead the company in weeping, and once more the audience was convulsed. Now, I am not defending that sort of treatment at all times, but I fancy that I have seen occasions when a cheerful idiot would be a regular godsend to a crowd of people, who were depressed by some miserable soul who had managed to worry them with troubles, which were largely the children of his own disordered brain.

Now, worry is often due to temperament. People who are nervous are very apt to be very subject to anxiety. They tell you that they are like their father or mother, and they seem to be quite proud that they are perpetuating such a distinguishing family characteristic. From what they say you would come to the conclusion that worrying, like red hair, runs in families. I suppose that they are right, for I have seen infant faces that have wrinkled up with worries that were apparently too great for the baby mind to carry. My! how the poor little ones fret their infant souls over ills too great for them to find words to express. And

men are just overgrown infants. They worry also, and why they worry is very hard to explain. It is likely just an inheritance from one of their ancestors who had an unusual power in the direction of fretting himself concerning many things.

I read a story the other day that contains a moral not only for mothers, but for a great many others as well. "Yes," said the old man, "she's pretty well, Mother is, if 'twant for worrying about the children. Lizbeth is at Conway. She took the school there. Samuel's boarding place is across the river. Sometimes he crosses on the ferry, and sometimes on the canoe, but although he is a good swimmer Mother is always expecting him to get drowned. The two younger ones are at home. John wants to strike out for himself, but Mother thinks that if he does he will never come back. She was afraid she'd never raise Car'line, but she did, but she hain't got over that old worry. There's nothing special the matter with any of them. The truck garden's done well this year, and Mother's well. She has no rheumatism this year. She's all right if 'twasn't for worrying. Christian? Bless you, yes! This forty year. She ain't afraid but what the Lord will take care of her and the rest of the world, but seems like as if she ain't got faith to believe He's to be trusted with the children."

Now is that not true to life? We all have a little corner that we feel we are responsible for, and we cannot trust even the blessed Lord Himself to take care of it for us. We stew and fret and chafe and make our souls miserable just because we cannot cast our

burden upon Him. We are like the poor fellow, who was going along a country road carrying a heavy grip. A farmer invited him to ride in his wagon, but the man instead of putting the grip down on the bottom of the wagon, carried it upon his knees. The farmer suggested that he would be more comfortable if he laid the grip down, but the traveller thought that he would be happier if he felt the weight, for then he would know that it had not got away from him. At the bottom of a great deal of our worrying is a lack of faith in God. We are afraid to trust Him with our affairs.

There are some considerations which are worth pondering. The man or woman who is a chronic worrier entirely ignores the New Testament teaching respecting God's care for the individual. It would do some folks a lot of good just to sit down, some Sabbath afternoon, and turn up the passages that show just how definite is the teaching respecting the Divine love for, and watchfulness over, the individual. You know that it is easy to feel that, in the vast multitude, we may be forgotten. I suppose that is why the Master gave us the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Just read the fifteenth chapter of Luke and do not say to yourself, "These stories were told to a few Jews nineteen hundred years ago, and have no application to me." Say rather, "God is the same now as then. Let me see how Jesus represents Him in this talk." You will find that this chapter will be a soul-bracer. You will get a glimpse of the care of God for you. Then read the twelfth chapter of the same Gospel, and see how He cares for the

sparrows and the ravens, and the lilies, and the grass, and how the Master rings the changes upon the thought, "Why are ye anxious?" Can you not trust the Father who does not forget the birds of the air and the flowers of the field?

Then it is worth while remembering that this wonderful Father is accessible to our cry. Through Jesus Christ we may approach Him. We may lay our case before Him. It has always done me much good to remember the human nature of my Lord. There are a great many things that I do not understand concerning Jesus Christ, but I understand sufficient concerning Him to get a world of comfort out of Him. He is Divine but He is human also, and somehow his humanity brings him very close to me. Because He is a man He understands me, He sympathises with me, He is ready to help me. He has been through my experiences and so is qualified to understand my case. I tell you, my worrying friend, that that means a great deal. An acquaintance of mine told me that when his wife died a great many folks tried to comfort him, but, as he put it, "Their words did not hit the spot." He could not shed a tear. He was stunned by the awfulness of what had befallen him. At last a friend came in. He did not say much, but he put his arm across the shoulders of the stricken man, and said, "Old man, I have been through it all." And that man said that it seemed as if at last he had found one who understood, and the healing balm fell upon his soul from that hour. Jesus understands. Do not carry the burden alone. Tell God all about it as you approach Him through Jesus

Christ; be assured of His sympathy, for the man who has seen Jesus has seen the Father; cast your burden upon the Lord and do not try simply to worry along; remember that your affairs are in far safer hands than yours; rest upon God's Fatherhood, wisdom, love and power; and instead of worry, there will be sunshine in your soul.

XIX

OILING THE HINGES OF THE CHURCH DOOR

WHEN I was a little fellow I used to attend an old-fashioned church whose door was hung upon old-fashioned hinges, and occasionally they squeaked most villainously. The door opened directly into the meeting-house, and, whenever a worshipper entered the building, everybody had due notice of his arrival. The squeaky old hinges lent an added charm to church attendance in the estimation of one small worshipper. But one day just before the service started, a newcomer into the congregation produced from his breast pocket a bottle of oil and a feather, and undertook to anoint the dry, rusty hinges of the ancient edifice. The job was well done. When the senior deacon arrived, as far as receiving any notice from the vociferous old hardware was concerned, he was as unimportant as the town scavenger. He seemed to be rather surprised that the door did not act as usual; but after the service was over he duly praised the thoughtfulness of the brother who had removed the vocal chords from the hinges of the meeting-house door. Moreover, the oil had made it easier to push the door open; and I remember how I used to exert my small strength in opening and closing that ancient piece of carpentry after the man with the oily feather had operated thereupon. Oil is a fine thing for dry, rusty hinges.

Oiling the Hinges of the Church Door

I have been thinking that nowadays we do not suffer from a lack of oil for church-door hinges. Ball-bearings make easy the task of pushing open the door into the church. A little turn of the handle and you are in almost before you are aware that the deed has been done. The hinges work so smoothly and noiselessly that nobody else knows that you are in unless he has actually seen your initiation into the Church of God. The church door swings open far more easily than that of any other organisation that I am acquainted with. In fact, some folks wonder if there is any door at all, for so little is demanded of prospective members.

I have a vivid recollection of the kind of reception that my application for membership in a certain well-known secret order received. My name was read out in a regular meeting of the lodge and was referred to a committee, who reported one month later. In the meantime every member of the lodge was notified, that on a given evening, the name would be ballotted upon. The door of membership was safeguarded. I suggest a question: Why should we not be as careful in guarding entrance into the Church? Is the Church of God not the holiest organisation upon earth? Has she not a mission that demands that we see to it that men of faith comprise her membership? Is it not of prime importance that she shall have a good report from "them that are without"? Is there not a danger in taking the old-fashioned, slow-working, stiff, squeaky hinges from the door and establishing a modern revolving door that gathers folks up and shoots them into the church almost before they can draw their breath? It is an in-

teresting spectacle to see the multitude passing in, but is that the way to make the church's witness clear and strong?

I am not a "church knocker." I am a friend of the Church, and am certain that no other organisation can take her place. She is the Divinely appointed instrument for carrying the gospel message to the very ends of the earth. There has been too much mud-slinging at the Church and too little recognition of her Divinely appointed mission. When the Church makes herself cheap, the world is quite ready to take her at her own estimate. When she esteems herself as "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," outsiders will treat her accordingly. I am afraid that there is some reason for the criticisms that are being levelled at her. The desire for numbers, the love of social position, the worship of money—these are the things that are said to be taking the "pep" out of the Church's message. "What you do talks so loud that I can't hear what you say," is sometimes applied to the so-called Church of Christ. In these days of reconstruction we must give heed to a criticism like that; for, if the Church's message is weakened by the Church's life, she must face the fact and repent in dust and ashes if she is to be a blessing to the world.

Personally, I have never believed that she ever gains by installing a revolving door to expedite entrance, nor does the oily hinge help matters. I have noticed that revolving doors shoot people in, but they also shoot them out just as fast. We do well to heed the ancient proverb, "Come easy, go easy." I am convinced that the reason that we have so many unspiritual church

members is to be found in the ease with which the church door opens to receive, not simply applicants, but all who can be coaxed and wheedled and bribed into giving a reluctant consent that their names shall be considered for church membership. I was acquainted a few years ago with a man who is said to have applied fourteen times for membership in a certain secret society. He finally was received because, like the unjust judge, the lodge was troubled by his continual pleading. But I know a professional man, who was solicited to become a member of a certain church, and when he objected that his life was not such as a Christian ought to lead, was told that the Church overlooked a great many things. His manhood, backed up by his early home training, led him to administer a rebuke which, it is to be hoped, that pastor will not forget to his dying day, for the prospective member's life was a scandal in the community, yet he had a good social position and was wealthy. Now I grant that this is an extreme case, but it emphasises the evil I am trying to point out. The Church door ought always to open easily to the repentant sinner who has placed his faith in the Saviour of the lost; but it should be locked against all who have no desire to turn from their sin, but who apply for membership in the Church because it will throw the mantle of respectability over a life that will not bear investigation.

There ought to be the ring of reality in our religious life. The organisation, which God has appointed to aid us in giving expression to the deepest

and best within us, should be a mighty power just because men recognise that its membership has a humble trust in the Saviour of sinners, and a real allegiance to the Lord who died for them. It is wonderful how much people will overlook if they are convinced that the offender made an honest effort to do right. And it is remarkable how folks look beneath all the extravagances and peculiarities of religious people, and will exhibit as a great treasure some word or action which manifests honour, honesty, kindliness, justice, self-sacrifice Christlikeness.

It has been my good fortune to have been brought into contact with a great many sects who place stress upon "the plain dress." I do not agree with a great deal of the teaching which they give respecting the Christian's attire, but I cannot forget the remark that a rough diamond once made to me. He said: "Mister, some of these folks look awful guys the way they dress. But, mister, they're good. Yes, they're good." No greater compliment could come to any religious body than for rough godless men to recognise that its members are good. The power of the Church in this world inheres in her goodness and that goodness is dependent upon the goodness of the individual member. Thus it is essential that the door shall be guarded and that the Church shall demand of her members whole-hearted allegiance to her Lord and Master.

XX

HOW THE PEW MAY HELP THE PULPIT

I SUPPOSE that the majority of my readers hardly expected the headline to read like that, for they have been accustomed to expect the pulpit to aid the pew, and have been very apt to voice their dissatisfaction if the sermon was not inspiring and stimulating. There are not a few who attend church with about the same mental attitude that they attend the opera: "Well, we're here. Let the performance begin." To them the church service is very largely an exhibition of the preacher's power as an expositor of the word of God, or an interpreter of current events; and from the time that he enters the pulpit until the benediction is pronounced he is on the critical gridiron; and when the congregation has dispersed that gridiron is carried home and does duty as a bouquet upon the centre of the dinner table. You know subjects for discussion are rather scarce at Sabbath dinners, and it is easy to discuss the minister. To-day we are going to turn the tables and discuss the congregation. How may the pew help the minister?

Punctuality in attendance is a virtue that ministers much admire. There are some folks that are always late. In fact, I remember one clever woman, not a minister's wife either, who was so exasperated one

Sabbath morning as she thought of a certain family that appeared in church just in time to miss the collection, and to disturb the minister as he settled down to "firstly," that she said concerning them: "These Browns were all born twenty-five minutes late." Apparently they had never caught up. There are some churches that have certain rules governing the entrance of worshippers. No one, for example, is permitted to walk up the aisle during prayer or reading of the Scripture, and in this way there is little disturbance of the congregation by late-comers; but we have all attended services which were sadly interrupted by folks who might just as well have been on time. There are always a few who have a great interest in the millinery parade or the dress show, and they will crane their necks to behold what the newcomer is wearing, and these inquisitive souls are not all confined to the female members of the congregation. Sometimes, too, there are people who are charged with purposely coming late to meeting just to show off their new clothes. I have lived in communities where newly-married couples, together with their attendants, came to church together one or perhaps two Sabbaths after the ceremony, and you might be sure that they would be late, and that the whole congregation, from the youngest even to the eldest, would forget all about the glories of the New Jerusalem to contemplate the joys of the newly-weds and the magnificence of their attire. The poor preacher was a poorer preacher than ever on such an occasion, for he could not hold the attention of his hearers in competition with a dress parade and an ex-

hibition of shy pride in each other on the part of bride and bridegroom.

Then it would help the minister a great deal if strangers who are being conducted to a pew by a courteous and dignified usher would accompany the usher all the way, and not drop into a pew near the door, allowing the master of ceremonies to march to the head of the aisle utterly unconscious that he has no following, and greatly to the amusement of some of the younger folk. The minister often has a sense of humour, and he feels that such occurrences are hardly in keeping with the expectation of the people that he shall be a model of grave and reverent deportment in the House of God.

The seat-end hog is a great trial to the man on the platform. There are always a few folks who have a love for the end seat. In fact, they seem to think that the Almighty made them to occupy just that spot. The church may be crowded, the ushers troubled to find accommodation, but the seat-end hog never moves. If any one gets into the pew that he occupies he does it by climbing over a pair of number ten boots, stumbling past a cotton umbrella and a pair of knees that have all sorts of angles upon them. But the seat-end hog only grunts; yet his grunt has not the welcome note in it.

Once in a while I have noticed men who drop into their seat with a sort of resigned look such as a fellow wears when he goes to get a tooth drawn. There is no joy in the countenance—just an expression which says, "I have to be here at least once every Sunday. Don't

you pity me?" And then there are others, who screw up their eyes until there is no expression in them, and, if the preacher is looking for inspiration from them, he will be much disappointed, for there is no more expression there than in a graven image. Now, how would you like to be the man in the pulpit under such circumstances? I fancy that Dr. Poundtext has a hard time to get up any enthusiasm when he gazes upon that face. Yet there it is, generally in the place where he cannot miss it, and many a good sermon is spoiled because some miserable sinner fails to show that he has any intelligence in his facial organisation. But what an inspiration a glowing, expressive countenance is! Many a preacher owes his pulpit triumphs to one face in the audience.

When I was a lad there were a great many different brands of Methodists. Some of them were popularly known as the "shouting Methodists." One dear old Methodist brother explained to me once that the more "respectable" a Methodist became the less he shouted; and I have noticed myself that the more the congregation shouted the greater was the energy that the preacher put into the sermon. In fact, he enjoyed himself just in proportion to the vocal appreciation shown by his hearers. I wonder if it would not hearten the minister if some one should break loose, and, setting aside that conventionalism that is the curse of the churches, should just give a good old-time shout of "Praise the Lord!" when the preacher has said something unusually inspiring? Of course, some folks might be shocked, but they never count for much re-

ligiously anyhow. Folks that stress correctness of behaviour in church usually have a greater appreciation of that than they have of spirituality.

Then would it not help the pulpit if once in a while when the minister preached a comforting, instructive, or inspiring sermon, you should drop him a little note through the mail just to let him know that he has helped you? There are, I fancy, quite a few preachers, who would not seek a change of pastorate if they were certain that their people appreciated their labours. It is said that a Scotchman never tells his wife that he loves her until she is dying—and then he does not tell it. Of course it was an enemy that said that. But it can be said that there are many hearers who never have spoken an appreciative word to their minister. He has to take a great deal for granted.

Dr. Whyte, of Free St. George's, Edinburgh, tells that when he was a young preacher, he had occasion to call one day upon an old lawyer, a man high in the councils of his church. After business was concluded, the old man glared at the young minister from under his bushy eyebrows and said: "Hae ye ony word for a puir sinner?" The young preacher was so taken by surprise that he was speechless for the moment, but the voice repeated insistently, "Hae ye ony word for a puir sinner?" All the young preacher could say under the circumstances was, "He delighteth in mercy." Then he got out of that office as soon as he could, mourning over the fact that he had done his Master's work so poorly. Next morning he received a note from the old lawyer which read somewhat as follows:

"My Dear Minister,—Yesterday when I spoke to you I was almost in despair. The hounds of hell were upon my track, the sins of my youth had come up against me, and my spirit was overwhelmed. But your words, 'He delighteth in mercy,' were as cold waters to a thirsty traveller. Always preach it! Always preach it! God bless you!" Do you wonder that that young preacher's heart sang for joy for many a day afterwards? And do you want to know how to help your minister? Just tell him when he helps you.

Pray for him also. You do not need to advertise it, but mention him to the Master in the secret chamber. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of." There is an atmosphere created by prayer that is recognised at once by the spiritually minded soul. And, when a minister comes into that atmosphere, he knows that others besides himself are anxious that his message shall not fail to help men and to glorify the Master.

XXI

WHY DO FOLKS DEMAND SHORT SERMONS?

IT cannot be denied that there is a demand for short sermons. It is to be heard upon every hand, and many are the criticisms that the long-winded preacher is subjected to. A good deal of fun is made at his expense. Just the other day I read of a preacher, who suddenly stopped reading his manuscript and made the following startling statement: "My friends, we have in our house a young dog which has a fondness for chewing manuscript. He has been operating upon this sermon, and so I am compelled to stop here." After the service was over, a lady sought out the minister and asked him if he had more than one dog of that breed; for, said she, "I should like to buy him and present him to our pastor." Of course, the story is funny, and there is no doubt that the lady is bright, but the anecdote belongs to the same class as "Thirdly has just blown out of the window" and "The mice have eaten up fourthly." However, the story gives me an opportunity of discussing the question of short sermons.

It may be said first of all that the sermon to-day is a great deal shorter than it was in the days of our grandfathers. The English seem to love an elaborate service. The Scotch are sermon tasters. To them the

sermon is the *pièce de résistance,* the one item in the service to which all others are subordinate. No one can listen like a Scot, and no one can criticise like him either. The sermon furnishes him food for thought during all the week, and in this respect he differs from those who regard the sermon simply as an incident in the service of worship. Fifty years ago it was expected that the minister would preach at least an hour, while the exposition in many cases took up another hour. Since that day time has become more precious, religious gatherings have multiplied, no longer is the morning service the only religious meeting on the Sabbath, and, as a consequence, it is not expected that the minister will attempt to double the instruction that was given in the good old days when the voice of the preacher was the only voice that claimed public attention from one week's end to the other. We must also remember that the form of the service has changed also. The coming of the organ and the choir has had the effect of lengthening what the Scotch call "the preliminaries," and, if the service is to be kept within reasonable limits, the sermon must be shortened.

Just now the sermon is suffering from the encroachments of music, announcements, and various embellishments of what would otherwise be a very bare service. One is often inclined to ask why we should always sing four hymns, and why these should generally be the longest in the hymnary; why the choir programme should be so lavish and the sermon crowded into a corner; why announcements for every conceivable purpose are given from the pulpit, when, in many cases,

the objects seem to have no relation whatever to the work of the Church or of the cause of Christ in general. The pulpit announcement evil has reacted upon the sermon. A good many people are mentally tired long before the sermon is reached, just because they have had to listen to a list of announcements that would weary an angel.

Personally, I do not believe that the average man is tired of the sermon. The people love good preaching. They flock to hear it. They are ready to stand during the delivery of long sermons that have a great message. They will come Sabbath after Sabbath to hear the man who proclaims his message with the authority of a prophet. The sermon which has compelling power is never criticised on the ground of its length. The professional utterance, however, comes in for much censure, and is regarded generally as an evil which had better be got rid of as soon as possible. Professionalism kills any pulpit deliverance, and professionalism is the secret of the clamour for the short sermon.

Some one will at once charge me of being an old-fashioned Presbyterian, who loves a very long sermon. Well, I am not, and I do not think that it is necessary to have a long sermon every Sunday. But I do not think that it is fair to the preacher for every man in the congregation to pull out his watch when the text is announced as if to say, "Old man, you have 20 minutes to reach the Amen corner. Go to it and we'll time you." And then, if the minister fails to make the goal on time, these same men will draw out their watches, snap down the case and call the preacher's at-

tention to the fact that he is not in the 20-minute class. There are some preachers who can, on some texts, give a glorious and inspiring message in 20 minutes. On some other texts they would just be getting nicely started when the alarm bell would be rung. And there are hearers who are just becoming interested when the preacher has reached the 20-minute post. For him to stop then would be most unsatisfactory to some of his audience at least. The man in the pulpit ought to have sufficient time allowed him to enable him to deliver his message.

I have heard few good stump speakers. Such men in a political campaign are in great demand. They are used generally to work up enthusiasm. But the speaker whose utterances are heralded all over the country is allowed abundance of time to make a weighty and informing and inspiring deliverance. If you want to hear something worth while you must be ready to watch the old warhorse warming up to his work as he passes the 20-minute post. You know that the very best things will come after that. And if you are to get the best out of your minister, do not be too particular about the condition of the clock. The minister will do better work the less the clock bulks in the minds of the congregation. And there are times when even the most critical is ready to sit a little longer than usual. I have known some secret society men, who seldom attended church on the ground that the preacher was prosy, to listen with the greatest interest to a sermon which had special reference to the order to which they belonged. The length of the sermon did not seem to

trouble them that day. In fact, they would have considered a short address as out of keeping with the dignity of the occasion.

The demand for short sermons is first and foremost a demand for preaching that grips the hearer. There are sermons which do not extend over more than twenty minutes that are very long indeed, for they have no message and no enthusiasm. There are sermons that run an hour or an hour and a quarter that we regard as short, because we were receiving something that met the need of mind and heart. The personal equation is most important. One Sabbath not long ago I sat in a church in which a large number of business and professional men were worshippers. The preacher lays no claim to oratorical power, nor is he a great scholar. He is simply a good, earnest Christian worker, rather daunted by the fact that he had to address an audience in such a large building. But he had a message. That message came from a burning heart. The audience felt that this was not a mere professional utterance. The professional men began to lean forward, the business men sat up, the whole congregation was intensely interested. The manhood of the preacher commanded their attention. The man behind the message challenged their notice. His sincerity, enthusiasm and faith shone through his words, and when half-past twelve came no one grumbled, for hearts had been helped. But I have attended services where the audience has been dismissed at twelve o'clock sharp, when I felt that we might in mercy have been dismissed twenty minutes sooner.

Preaching is coming into its own again. The man who has a message has a great opportunity now. The ecclesiastic will have a trying time, but the man with "the burden of the Lord upon him" will have a wonderful hearing. Men are interested in that which affects human life and destiny. As long as sin and suffering, sorrow and trial, temptation and difficulty, death and its problems have to be faced, the preacher, who has a helpful, sympathetic, loving message will be welcomed, and men will sit at his feet rejoicing that God has appointed this special office to bring glad tidings to burdened hearts.

XXII

PUTTING THE EMPHASIS IN THE RIGHT PLACE

A SMALL boy went to a tailor to be measured for a suit. After the tape had been used upon the laddie, the tailor asked him if he wished the shoulders padded. "No," said the little chap, "but I do want the seat padded." That boy felt that the tailor was inclined to put emphasis in the wrong place. He had learned by experience just where padding is likely to be of most use, and he wanted it put where it would do most good.

We are all very apt to put the emphasis in the wrong place. I would not introduce a jarring note into our holiday celebrations, but I have often felt that we are training our children to regard Christmas as a time for getting rather than for giving. Of course we have been trying to counteract that idea through our White Gift Sabbath and other celebrations in the Sunday School; but how many parents are there, who really try to instil into the minds of their little children the idea that there is greater joy to be received out of giving than from receiving? I am led to meditate thus because of a very touching incident that came to my notice the day after Christmas.

A father, with whom I am acquainted, noticed that on Christmas Eve his little boy and girl hung up their

stockings at the fireplace, but they were not content with that. The little lad said: "We ought to leave something nice for Santa to eat. He'll be cold and hungry after his long drive." The little girl sagely agreed, and the two carefully prepared a lunch for Santa Claus. The father saw an opportunity to impress two little souls. He sat down at his typewriter, and wrote a letter from Santa Claus, telling the children that he had travelled long distances, in very cold and stormy weather, to bring gifts to boys and girls all over the world on Christmas Eve. He had found great happiness in doing this work for the children. He did not want any better job. It was always full of joy. But said he, "I do not remember ever having a little boy and girl thinking of me, and fixing a nice lunch for me as you did." And then there was added this word: "Always remember, children, that while you get great happiness out of the gifts that other people give you, the sweetest joy comes from being kind to others." That father told me that the little chap carried the letter all Christmas Day, every little while wanting his mother to read just what Santa said. He will never forget that lesson. Neither will the little girl. The day may come when they will regard Santa as a fictitious character, but that father made use of the vivid imagination of childhood to drive home the lesson that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." That is putting the emphasis in the right place.

For a long time before the war we were inclined to estimate a man's occupation by the amount of money that he could get out of it. I have heard young chaps

discussing very earnestly the relative advantages offered by certain occupations and professions. They generally agreed that the teaching profession and the ministry and medicine are "punk" because as a rule they do not offer large monetary returns. We are all aware, however, that there are no three professions that offer greater returns in real soul-satisfaction than these. There are no professions that do more for the physical, moral and spiritual welfare of mankind than they. And there are no three where more of the spirit of service and self-sacrifice is shown than in them. Many of us owe our first vision of duty and manhood to an earnest, high-minded teacher. All of us can testify to the value of school discipline in the making of character. We all have felt the moral value of a strong, manly minister in a community. I once heard a man say: "The devil laughs every time he sees a nice, dinky, little minister; but he shakes in his shoes when he meets a man." I felt that just about expresses what most of us feel. And the physicians! How much we owe to them! We city folks do not always realise just what benefactors they are to humanity, but our country cousins do. The doctor often risks his own health and life in the service of others. If I had a whole page in which to sing the praises of the doctor I could fill it all. Instead I am going to tell a story.

Somewhere in the mountain land of the South there was a doctor, a good and pious man—a friend and benefactor to all. On his old horse, with saddle-bags behind him, he climbed the steep mountain paths by

day and by night, ministering to those who needed him. His pay was small, his liberality large. By and by, after a long life of service, he died, and the mountaineers came to bury him. Tenderly they laid the old doctor's remains in a coffin, which they had themselves constructed; and on the mountain side, under the shadow of the overhanging peak, they dug a grave and put him away. At the head of the grave they set up a cross of wood, but this did not seem to satisfy them. There ought to be some writing upon it, but, alas! not a man of them could write. One old fellow with a little more ingenuity than the rest ran down to the nearby village, and came back with the sign that was over the old doctor's office door. He nailed it to the wooden cross over the grave, and this is the way it read: "Dr. Goodfellow—Office Upstairs." Maybe the thing was not so bad after all, and meant that in a better land—upstairs—the old doctor could still be found. In that case the emphasis was put in the right place, for a Christian doctor will not fail of his reward. But there are some men, well known in every community, over whose remains we should hesitate to place the sign, "Office Upstairs."

And this leads me to the serious part of my meditation. Should we not lay the emphasis upon the things that are spiritual? I have heard a good deal concerning other worldliness. There are a good many folks that are ready to sneer at the "old-time religion." What they sneer at is not the old-time religion but a caricature of it. The old-time religion made character. If you recall the days of your youth you will find

that the sweetest, strongest, manliest, public-spirited souls were the men who loved to sing about having a title clear to mansions in the skies. I am ready to admit that in their religious vocabulary, there were many expressions that we have discarded as being unworthy of men made in the Divine image and unworthy of the work which God has given us to do in the world. But how these old men did stand for righteousness! Our love of one form of justice—that between nations—is an inheritance from the men who were journeying with their faces set Zionward. To-day we are talking about salvation by character. They spoke of character through salvation. It appears to me that that is the scriptural way of putting it. Salvation through character is a disappointing business. We never are as good as we feel we ought to be. Sin breaks out at unexpected places. Where we thought we were strong we find that we are weak. To attain salvation by our goodness is like looking for a pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow.

But character is attained through salvation. If a man have a definite experience of God—I do not care what you call it, whether conversion or regeneration, or swearing allegiance to Christ, or putting yourself into Christ's hands, there does come new power into the life. The man who was weak finds that he has power over his temptations. He becomes a new man. His tastes are different. His character is changed mightily. He is a new creature, for character comes through salvation. Let us put the emphasis in the right place.

XXIII

HOW GOD COMFORTS

THAT title fascinates me. It ought to appeal to souls that are bruised and bleeding. It is suggestive of coddling, and cuddling, and petting, and humouring, and pampering, and caressing. I wonder if that is God's method of comforting His people. I think of that wonderful statement in Isaiah's prophecy, "As one whom his mother comforteth so will I comfort you," and I fancy that I have a proof-passage in favour of the "coddling and cuddling" method; but memory gets busy, and I recall the fact that all of a mother's comfort is not along those lines. I remember mustard plasters, and sharp needles, and dental forceps, but in the end they were instruments of comfort. And so I am certain that, while there are times when God, like a mother, gathers His heartbroken child into His tender arms and whispers assurances of His love and help, there are other times when His method of comfort is startling, and painful, and gives rise to questioning regarding His wisdom and kindness.

Comfort is a very delicate task. You cannot use the same method in all cases. It may do for a mother to kiss the dirty little knee of the wee laddie that has fallen down and hurt himself. The assurance of mother's sympathy may make everything all right in a very few minutes. But when the same little lad is

screaming with pain because of pneumonia, she runs for the mustard box and the flour, for the counter-irritant is the only thing that will avail at a time like that. The wee laddie does not like mustard-plasters any better than his elders, but the sting of the mustard is a mighty good thing. It relieves engorged cells. The blood rushes to a new centre of disturbance away from the old. Nature resumes her normal course, and so cure comes.

God comforts sometimes by means of the mustard-sting. Have you not seen it over and over again? Perhaps you have felt the healing of the counter-irritant. There are souls that are so crushed by their sorrow that they are apt to give themselves up to the luxury of grief and to forget everything else, when there comes upon their consciousness, like the sting of the mustard, the cry of the little child, the call of an important task, the demands of others upon them, and, in the very effort to do their duty, they get comfort. Many a soul has reason to bless God that his sense of duty simply would not permit him to sit down and pity himself. Work is never so great a blessing as in the hour when we are ready to let our troubles overwhelm us. It helps us to forget our grief. In other words it provides another interest.

The needle or the knife is sometimes used in comforting. Pus often gathers and has to be removed before there can be relief. We remember how mother sterilises the needle and how she thrusts it deep into the abscess. We almost feel the pain of it yet. But the relief! It is worth all the pain. And then the trips

to the dentist. I used to think when I was a little chap that it was too bad to pay him for making me howl like an Indian. Mother knew, when the gum was inflamed and the cheek swollen, that heroic treatment was needed, and so, in spite of tears and pleadings, off I went to the man with the forceps. And does not God sometimes take away the thing that threatened spiritual health? How He does take the pride out of us and makes us fit to live with! And doesn't He shatter our sinful ambitions in spite of our outcries, and leads us to abandon sinful habit because, through sickness, we learn that a well-regulated life brings real health and happiness?

I broke my leg some years ago, and after I had been in bed a while the limb was placed in a plaster cast and I was permitted to hobble about on crutches. One day, however, the doctor came in and removed the cast. There was a certain amount of comfort in that. But he said, "Walk across the room." I tried to do it, but I was afraid of that broken bone, and so I limped over, putting the weight upon the uninjured leg. "Put all your weight upon the left leg. You can't break it." "But it hurts." "Never mind that. You must expect it to hurt if you are to get it right again." And so God cures us of our selfishness. It hurts to be generous and thoughtful and kind. But we have to do as the "close" deacon did when he was asked for five dollars for the church. A voice seemed to say, "Two dollars is enough." The deacon was fighting his besetting sin, and knew that he dare not allow his penuriousness to master him. He said to the collector:

"Here's ten. Now squirm, old Natur!" That is the way to crucify the "old man."

But you say, Is all of God's comforting as unpleasant as that? By no means. The reason that I have spoken of such disagreeable things is that I might impress the lesson that all of God's comfort is not made up of coddling and anæsthetics. An anæsthetic is well enough in its place, but the system always feels its harmful effects. Better the throb of pain than the depressing effects of an anæsthetic if the patient can stand the pain—so says the physician. But there are some very commonplace methods of comfort which we often forget are God's, simply because they are so common.

Sleep is one of these. Did you ever notice that when one has been worn out with nursing, and the grief consequent upon the death of a loved one very often a deep natural sleep follows, and we rise feeling better than we had for many a day. I wonder if we are presumptuous in saying that God comforts us through renewing our tired-out bodies and our wearied minds by sending "Nature's sweet restorer, balmy sleep."

Sometimes we think that the sun will never shine again, our sorrow is so great. But time goes on and the sun begins to show himself, and after a while he shines as brightly as before. Time is a great healer, and it is a blessing that it is so. There are some folks who think that a great grief is worthy of deep mourning, and sad faces, and many tears. They desire to manifest their sorrow upon every possible occasion. They hang memorial wreaths and coffinplates in the

parlour and keep them there for years to depress, and irritate, and sadden every visitor, when God, in His mercy, meant that time should heal the heart-wound and joy should flood the soul once more.

The comfort often comes in our endeavour to help somebody else. We are very apt to be selfish in our griefs. We are apt to forget that there are other hearts that are just as sore as ours. It is an amazing thing to witness the new colour which our trouble assumes when we go out to minister to others. Our own pang is lessened when we endeavour to take the pang out of another soul. If you do not believe that try it and see.

I would not forget either that God's comfort often comes through the Scriptures. In our hour of loneliness and sorrow there are passages that are of wondrous preciousness, and they come to the heart with new freshness and beauty and healing. The Psalms of David and the Gospel of John are frequently the storehouses from which many a wounded heart receives its healing balm. Best of all, there is a sense of the nearness of the Lord given to the sorrowful and burdened soul. And that means sympathy and love and wisdom and rest. Did you ever feel the relief that comes when you realise that your Lord has not deserted you, but stands nearby? I have. Then I had "the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." Then the desolation of my sorrow was over, and the stars began to appear in my sky, and soon the quiet and beauty of the night filled my very soul.

XXIV

THE SOUL'S BATTLEFIELD

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON won widespread recognition and something like popularity through the story which he called, "The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." The hero of the book is a certain Dr. Jekyll, who, at the time he is introduced to the reader, has won a name and position for himself. He is wealthy, learned, distinguished. But the Dr. Jekyll that the world saw—benevolent, brilliant, irreproachable—was not all there was of him. There was another being within him—evil, cruel, sensual, always craving for ugly and debasing pleasures.

In the course of his scientific researches Dr. Jekyll discovered a potion by which he was able to give expression to the evil personality within him in a separate identity. He became literally a changed man, shrunken in figure, deformed in build, and of a countenance so sinister as to fill all who looked upon it with aversion and disgust. And to this changed identity, expressive of the evil principle within him, he gave the name of Edward Hyde. For a time he rejoiced in his discovery; for, when the craving for sensual pleasures was strong upon him, all that he had to do was to change himself into Edward Hyde, and he was immediately beyond the recognition of all his friends; and

when he had had his fill of debasing pleasure, all he had to do was to resort once more to the potion, and he was at once transformed back into Henry Jekyll, the great scientist. And so Stevenson gives us the picture of one man with two personalities—now Dr. Jekyll and now again Mr. Hyde, now delighting in reading religious books, and now writing blasphemous comments on the borders of the pages, now engaged in deeds of philanthropy, and now taking a fiendish delight in cruelty and murder.

Thus the uncanny story runs, but it culminates in an awful tragedy. Dr. Jekyll went out into the park one day, and, while sitting upon a seat, fell asleep. When he awoke he found that he had in his sleep, involuntarily, been metamorphosed into Mr. Hyde. It needed a potion once to effect the change. Now evil had become dominant, supreme, irresistible. Edward Hyde, the beastly and the vile, mastered and destroyed Dr. Jekyll, and not all the potions that he could concoct could turn him into the gracious, genial gentleman of other days. This awful story, however, is true to the facts of human experience. It is at his peril that any man indulges the lusts and passions and evil desires that seethe in his soul. They grow by what they feed upon. They become strong, tyrannical, irresistible, and, when a man wishes to say good-bye to shameful practices and habits and to turn to a life of honour and purity and truth, he may find that these evil habits have him in their grip.

The wonder-working potion and the miraculous change of face and form are merely part of the story-teller's outfit, but the duality of personality is far more

than the imagination of a novelist. It is a fact of human experience. We are not single, we are double. There is a higher self and a lower self, and these two personalities (if so we may designate them) make ceaseless war within us. Yet we are not like the man in Stevenson's story. We are not wholly good at one time and altogether bad at another. The good and the bad are engaged in a ceaseless struggle within our souls.

No doubt Stevenson obtained the foundation of his story from the seventh chapter of Romans, for at bottom it is but a dramatic rendering of that wonderful statement of St. Paul. The Apostle was well enough acquainted with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. He calls them in one place "the old man" and "the new man." In another he speaks of them as "the spirit" and "the flesh." They loom large in his writings because they lived in his own soul. He tells us, in that famous chapter in Romans, that on looking into himself he found two opposing principles at work. He found first of all a law of God in which he delighted after the inward man; but he found also a different law in his members which brought him into subjection to sin. The law of God—that was the Dr. Jekyll part of him; the law of sin—that was Mr. Hyde. And between these two there was incessant war. You can hear the clash of the conflict in such a sentence as this: "For the good which I would I do not; but the evil which I would not that I practise." So conscious is St. Paul of this wild discord, of this ceaseless battle in his soul, so shamed was he that Mr. Hyde so often got the better of Dr. Jekyll, that flesh so often triumphed over

spirit, that in his agony he cried: "O, wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

And St. Paul is not alone in his experience. Every man is a strange blend of good and evil. Heaven and hell are both within his soul. On the one side of him, he is made in the image of God, and he hungers for the God in whose likeness he is made. He possesses wonderful potentialities of goodness. There is a Dr. Jekyll side to him. But there is another and very different side to human nature. There is a sort of taint in the blood. There is a twist and bias towards evil. The evil principle fights against the good. Mr. Hyde disputes the sovereignty with Dr. Jekyll.

Such a condition results in unhappiness. I once heard a great American preacher telling of the restlessness of the sea. He said that the great expanse of waters is bound to the earth by the law of gravitation; but up in the sky there is another great power—the moon, tugging away at the heart of the sea, and, drawn between the two forces, the sea is always moaning, moaning, moaning. So it is with the heart of man. The clash between the forces of good and evil means unhappiness and misery. No man is as bad as he might be. The fact is that a man may plunge into sin, but he cannot entirely forget. There is something in the soul that makes protest and cries out for higher things. Peace is impossible as long as the heart is a divided empire.

An army put under the command of two generals, suspicious of one another, and intent upon thwarting

one another, could have only one history and that a history of humiliation and defeat. The man who is swayed by conflicting impulses, and is now on this side and now on that, counts for nothing. There may be room for the "cross-bench mind" in politics. There is absolutely no room for the "cross-bench" character in morals. To count on the side of right we must be entirely devoted to the right. We cannot serve two masters. The fervent amen of the Sabbath worshipper carries no conviction to the listener, if he is aware that it proceeds from a soul that is avaricious, and mean, and dishonest on the other six days of the week.

Moreover, our God will not share the empire of the heart with any other. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." There is no use of pleading the good life of Dr. Jekyll to offset the evil deeds of Mr. Hyde. God demands the whole heart. And so every man's problem is how to get rid of Mr. Hyde. Stevenson's book ended with the triumph of Edward Hyde—the evil self. St. Paul's story sings a Hallelujah Chorus over the triumph of Dr. Jekyll, the good self. Jesus Christ delivered him from "the body of this death." And what He did for St. Paul He can do for any man. The glory of the gospel is that it brings hope to the man who longs for victory in the conflict over the lower nature. It tells how Dr. Jekyll may be transformed into a mighty force for righteousness because he has been filled with a single purpose, prompted by a great love—love for Him who died for him—and, while Mr. Hyde may torment him occasionally, in the long run Jekyll is the conqueror.

XXV

SHOWING RELIGION AT HOME

WHEN I was a boy, often on my way to school I used to gaze into the window of a furniture store in which pictures were displayed. They were not of a very high order of merit, for most of them were mere chromos; but they held my boyish imagination with a compulsion that was most amazing. One of these notable works of art was entitled, "The Deacon's Family Prayers." The old man was represented as kneeling on the kitchen floor, with his family gathered about him in a similar attitude; but the head of the house had wearied his boys by the length of his prayer, and they had set the house dog on the cat, and she, for refuge, had climbed upon the deacon's back. The next picture set forth the sequel, and I assure you that it was very interesting, for, apparently, the deacon permitted his angry passions to rise. Since the old days when I looked into that window, I have learned that the hardest place in which to be religious is at home. There you are exposed to the acid test. There folks know you best. There you can deceive no one. Your very thoughts and motives are laid bare by the inmates of your home. It takes considerable courage to be religious at your own fireside.

I wonder if that is why home-religion is dying out?

Surely not. We have had, during the past four years, the greatest exhibition of heroism that has ever been witnessed by any age. Fathers and mothers have willingly parted with their boys, knowing not whether wounds or death might await them. The boys were ready to fight, and their parents were ready to sacrifice for an ideal. There is abundant evidence that our people possess plenty of moral courage. That courage, wedded to a great and compelling love, would be the foundation for a rebirth of home-religion that would transform Canada.

Home is the spot in which religion grows most naturally. I remember visiting a world-famous shrine a few years ago. Another visitor started a conversation with me, asking me if I had not been impressed with the spiritual atmosphere of the place. Now, I happen to be Scotch, and so have inherited some of the national characteristics of canniness. I enquired of my questioner how long she had been there, and was told that her stay had covered ten days. Then I asked how she had been impressed by the services and teaching given at that religious gathering-place. She told me that it was a holy place, that she had been lifted far above ordinary affairs, and had been living very near heaven. Now, said she, "I am going home, and these heavenly feelings will soon be but a memory." The rest of that day my mind would revert to that conversation, for I have very decided convictions respecting home religion. There is a type of religious life that we may rightfully call an exotic. There is another type that is natural, simple, homely.

I have an idea that the Lord is more pleased with a homely religious life than with a religion which depends upon outside help to enable it to exist and to be impressive. Religion began in the family circle. As long as the patriarchal family continued, the head of the clan seems to have been its priest. When clan life was abolished, the husband became head of the household; and, in the New Testament we have distinct injunctions respecting the duty of the parent towards the child. New Testament family religion has as its officiating priest the father of the family. In these days there is a disposition to throw the responsibility of the religious teaching of the children upon the mother; and I have heard not a few men say with a good-natured laugh: "My wife looks after the religious interests of the children." It is a good thing that she does so, otherwise the poor bairns would receive no religious training whatever. But do you think that a woman's influence alone is sufficient to develop an all-round character in your children? Are you not aware that it is generally agreed that the best results in education are achieved by a mixed staff of teachers? Masculine as well as feminine influence is needed; and the same two elements are necessary in home religion if it is to have much influence over your children.

A man said to me not long ago: "Why do you not pile on to the parsons? Prod them up. If the parsons had pep, the church would be in better shape." My answer was: "Do you think so? I fancy that the trouble lies deeper. How many men of your acquaintance have family prayer?" "Not very many," he re-

plied. "How many of your friends are known to be greatly interested in religion?" I asked. "Oh, come now. You want to get me into a corner. If you are to have a church of mighty influence, you must have strong, manly religious characters in it as well as sweet, true, godly women. The expression of the religious life will always be lop-sided as long as the men regard the church and religion as the special field for feminine activity." Personally I dislike effeminate men as heartily as I abhor short-haired women; but it is not necessary to be effeminate in order to do your duty to your God and your duty towards your family. You will find that it will draw upon all your manhood, for your ideal will become nobler as the years go by.

Every home should have its family altar. Is there anything that can take the place of that little family prayer-circle? I have been in a good many homes, and have witnessed a great many expressions of home-religion; but there is one scene that lingers in my memory. Father, mother and six children were seated for family worship. The father was a business man, but one of the most conscientious men regarding family prayer that I ever knew. A chapter was read, verse about, and then a hymn was sung, one of the children playing the accompaniment. Then the father said: "This morning I shall pray first, then Mamma, then R—, and J—, and then we shall say the Lord's Prayer together. Afterwards our friend will pray, too." And, in the most natural fashion, that father and mother prayed for their dear ones, and the children prayed, and the stranger within their gates prayed;

and I leave it to you whether or no religion, in the minds of these children, did not stand for something, especially when I tell you that these parents endeavoured to square all questions respecting conduct by the great guide-book, the word of God.

Now, family prayer is not the whole of the family religion. Family prayer has to be backed up by a godly life. It is wonderful how many things little eyes behold. They see when you lose your temper unjustly. They are aware of insincerity and unkindliness and dishonesty and untruthfulness; but there is no one that is so generous as a child in giving credit for good intentions, even if we fail to achieve our purpose. The father, who has won the verdict of goodness from his children, does not need any other certificate of character. And there are many fathers who stand high in the estimation of their families as men who honour God in their daily life. These are the days of reconstruction. We are examining foundations. We are endeavouring to discover what is the matter with society and how it can be remedied. Why should not the readers of this book ponder the question of home-religion as it affects their family circle; and, if there is anything wrong, with God's help get it right? Home-religion lies at the very foundation of a clean, honourable, and God-honouring national life. If God be not honoured in the home a nation soon perishes.

XXVI

HOW TO OBTAIN GREAT LEADERS

A SCOTCH preacher, being sent to officiate one Sunday in a country parish, was accommodated in the manse, in a very diminutive closet, instead of the best bedroom appropriated to strangers. "Is this the bedroom?" he said, starting back in amazement. "Deed ay, sir, this is the prophets' chamber." "It maun be for the minor prophets then," was the quiet reply. Nowadays we are told that all the prophets are in the minor class, and that the major prophets have departed never to return.

The other day I was talking to a gentleman respecting the death of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and he called attention to the fact that all the picturesque figures that are responsible for Confederation have passed away, and that apparently there is no one to take their places. Sir William Robertson Nicoll, in a recent number of the British Weekly, makes a somewhat similar statement respecting the political leaders of the Motherland. A Canadian well acquainted with the Canadian Bar in referring to the great losses that the profession has sustained during the last three years, mourned over the passing of men who captured the popular imagination and chained the admiration of the multitude. And a preacher told me recently: "The great preachers have

died out. The average pastor is the manager of an organisation rather than a prophet speaking on behalf of God." In all of these cases there is a wail over the passing of great picturesque figures.

When you hear so many voices in agreement, there is likely some truth in the statements that are made. You may discount it by pointing out that some men were accounted great in their own day, who would be regarded as very ordinary individuals now. Education is more general, the average of ability in some of the professions has risen, there is a tendency to idealise the great men of the past—but, when you have offered your last word in apology for the lack of great picturesque figures in our day, you feel that you have not convinced yourself, nor have you convinced others, that you have been able to account for the scarcity of great outstanding figures in politics, in law, and in the Church.

It seems to me that in nearly every case the men, who, in the past, have charmed the popular imagination and have been regarded almost as supermen, have been developed through hardship. The university of hard knocks has a great many distinguished graduates. You do not grow great men easily. It is said that a hero worshipper went to the birthplace of Henry Clay, and raved over the mountains, and went into perfect ecstasy of delight over the stars that shone upon that spot. "No wonder," he exclaimed, "Clay was great!" "Stranger," said an old timer, "we have always had the mountains and the stars, but we don't seem to raise no Henry Clays now." It is easier for a lad to get an

education now than it was fifty or sixty years ago. Parents are able to carry the burden of training their sons for the professions, and, in many cases, "they begin where the old man left off." We are very proud that they do not have to suffer the hardships endured by their sires. Yet is not a very important element in training for great and effective leadership the development of the whole personality through hardship? The tree that stands the gale best grows where the winds blow hardest, and the character that is most rugged is not developed by coddling, and petting, and shielding from the hardships of life. Our wealth may prove to be a national catastrophe, if it discourages the development of the rugged qualities of soul that find expression only as they are called out through early trial and suffering and difficulty. It may be that the boys, who have had to face the hardships entailed by the war, may thereby have received the very training which will fit them for great and effective leadership in the days to come.

The great men of the past have generally fallen under the spell of some other personality that has had a mighty influence in moulding their character. Sometimes it has been a father, oftener a mother, occasionally a teacher. One of the regrettable things about our modern home life is that the intimacy of the home is broken into, and the child very early drifts away from its tender, strong and pure guidance and feels the power of other influences that counteract the highest and best. The rural home has the greatest opportunity in the development of a character that will be the basis of

a most potent influence in coming days. When the humble rural home decays, the country is in a sad way, for hitherto it has supplied the bulk of the men who have been accounted great amongst us. Back to the land has more than an economic basis. The nation that dwells in cities soon loses that mysterious and tender sentiment which has hitherto been the mightiest influence in helping men to be good and to achieve. In any case, we are safe in saying that if our homes are to supply the kind of leadership that we must have, the parents must regard parentage as a vocation rather than as an avocation. Parents who realise the joy and the glory and the solemnity of the parental office will give themselves in companionship and counsel and inspiration to their children. That is where too many fall down nowadays.

It is safe also to declare that great leaders usually have caught an early glimpse of a mighty purpose which they felt that they must achieve. Abraham Lincoln's soul burned within him when he beheld the horrors of slavery, and he determined to wipe the traffic out if he could. It was many years before the opportunity came and the task was accomplished. Many a great preacher has seen the vision in his boyhood days. Many a famous missionary has had the missionary purpose born in his soul long before anybody else thought that the laddie was dreaming dreams respecting sacrifices for the sake of the dwellers in darkness. You often smile at a lad's idea of what he would like to be; but have you ever noticed that, when an unselfish, a moral, a religious purpose fills the boy's

horizon, if the influences for good that have produced such a vision be continuous, one day the laddie reaches his goal? Conviction in respect of duty is a mighty element in the making of a great leader.

But you cannot obtain great leadership where the sense of God is not very real and potent. The religious sanction gives driving power to purpose. The man who feels that he is doing what God wants him to do, the man who feels that he has God behind him backing him up in his efforts, if he possess any of the qualities of leadership, will sway others by the impact of his moral earnestness. A while ago, I read that remarkable book, "Fear God and Take Your Own Part," by Colonel Roosevelt. As I read it, I felt that it was an unconscious disclosure of the secret of his wonderful grip upon the confidence of his fellow-citizens, and upon the world at large. The ex-President was a man in whose life God meant much. The righteousness of national and international dealings is the theme of this book published in the early days of the war. He speaks like an ancient prophet: "Righteousness is the end, and peace a means to the end, and sometimes it is not peace but war which is the proper means to achieve the end. Righteousness should breed valour and strength. When it does breed them it is triumphant; and when it is triumphant, it necessarily brings peace. But peace does not necessarily bring righteousness."

If our leaders in the days to come are to be truly great, we must grow them in the home. We must lay ourselves out in the most unselfish and helpful fashion

for our children. We must not allow business or pleasure to tempt us to rob them of what we owe as parents. We must never forget that the Christian home is the most potent instrument in the training of good citizens and the development of the qualities that make for leadership. The child who is early impressed with a sense of the righteousness of God will have a high ethical standard, and if at the same time he learns of the love of the Father, he will have broad sympathies, and these qualities give some guarantee of a leadership that will be helpful, even if it never reaches the point of greatness.

XXVII

THE SHADOWS WHICH WE CAST

IN conversation with a man a little while ago, he told me that he never went to church. As he seemed to be very well satisfied with himself, and was inclined to criticise parsons and churches, I suggested to him that church-going is one of the means which we possess of informing our neighbours that we take a deep interest in religion, and that, in the neighbourhood in which he lived, he was likely set down as an irreligious man because he was not seen on his way to service upon the Lord's Day. I endeavoured to impress upon him that every life exerted an involuntary influence, and, while his habit of spending his Sundays at home might be satisfying to himself, and while he might read his Bible and good books on the Sabbath, his neighbours could not be expected to know how he spent his Sunday. They did know that he was not a church-goer, and, as a consequence, he was reckoned by them as being opposed to Christianity. Then he told me that he did not care what his neighbours think. I have noticed that when a man gets cornered in an argument he generally springs some such statement as that. Well, in many cases, a fellow ought to care what his neighbours think. I do not believe that we should be like the man in Æsop's famous fable who, in trying

to please everybody, pleased nobody, and lost a donkey into the bargain; but I am convinced that, when my actions are likely to be misconstrued and I regarded as a friend of the enemy, I should take special pains to see to it that I make it clear just where I stand in respect to my allegiance to Jesus Christ.

Some time ago I read a story concerning a little lad who had lost his shadow. He did hate to have the old thing chasing him, he said, and so in some mysterious fashion the shadow departed, but in a few days he was very miserable for he was regarded as peculiar. Every other child had a shadow but himself, and he longed to be like his playmates. At length the shadow was restored to him and he was happy once more. However that little chap got rid of his shadow I know not, but I do know that none of my readers can divest himself of his, because I regard the shadow as a symbol of the involuntary influence which a man exerts upon other lives. Life and influence are inseparably connected. Spirit influences spirit, sometimes voluntarily, very often involuntarily. Sometimes I think that involuntary influence is the more important.

The strength and character of our involuntary influence is the truest index of the real quality of our lives. I sat one day in a great congregation, and a gentleman came in. His face was that of a man whom you instinctively trust. He sat down in a pew, and, in a few moments, a little lad perhaps four years of age slipped out of the seat which his mother occupied and climbed up beside the stranger, and a little girl from another pew was soon seated on the other side,

and the fatherly man had an arm around each. When the service closed the gentleman was asked whose children they were. He replied, "I do not know. But I love children and somehow the kiddies find it out." Of course they do, and they find out that you do not love children without your having to utter a word.

Involuntary influence is the natural outcome of character. It is one of the things that we cannot put on. Have you ever noticed that some polished individual is disapproved by your wife, while you think that the said person is just fine. You question the little woman why she does not like the man, and very often she has nothing to say except that she is sure that he is not a good man. Then you depart muttering that "women are funny anyhow." But one day you discover that your wife is right, and then you begin to wonder how she ever detected the real character of the person who has just revealed his infamy. Likely it is due to the fact that her intuitions being much finer than yours, she discovered the "shadow" much more quickly than you. Where a woman's affections are not engaged, she is a much better judge of moral uprightness than any man. When her affections are engaged she is very apt to distrust her intuitions.

The religious hypocrite is often discovered by reason of the shadow he casts. He may clothe himself in the garments of religion, and the accents of worship may fall from his lips, but the shadow reveals his character. As some one well put it: "What you do talks so loud that I can't hear what you say." The shadow cast by the hypocrite is so decided in its

character that we are ready to discount all his utterances, be they ever so true. And yet there are a good many folks who judge a man by the oiliness of his speech and the religiosity of his verbiage. They cannot understand why other folks do not trust such good men. I never heard any one who could talk more piously than the itinerant vendors of family bibles, who used to turn up periodically in my younger days. And I never knew anybody whom the mistress of the manse was less delighted to see. My mother knew that all the pious wordiness was just a bid for cheap entertainment; for these knights of the grip considered that, since they were selling bibles, they were allied to the ministry and were entitled to enter any manse and remain there until their work for the Lord, and incidentally for their own profit, was ended in the community. And we children used to "size up" the visitors to our home by the character of their religious vocabulary. You may be sure that we could tell an agent for family bibles every time.

But is it not a wonderful experience to meet a man whose shadow nerves you to great fidelity, honesty, real Christlikeness? There are such men in the world. There are such men in your own circle of acquaintances. Often they are not very talkative, but watch the shadow. It tells the life-story. A gentleman once told me, "I make it my aim in my business life to be like Mr. Blank. He is my ideal business man—honest, fair, alert." How that shadow was influencing others! Another gentleman referring to the same Mr. Blank, declared that he was "a very fine type of character.

I often ask myself when I am in a difficulty, what would Mr. Blank do were he in my place?"

Now what you and I desire is to acquire the secret of being such men as will radiate an influence that will tell for good upon our fellow-citizens. We should covet that above everything else. What makes the man of worth is not his dollars, but his character. And so our problem all simmers down to this: How can I attain such a character that even my involuntary influence shall be a blessing to others? That is a pretty large order, is it not? But other lives have been transformed. Characters have been made over in such a fashion that you can scarcely realise that the gracious, beautiful personality was once unworthy of the friendship of decent men and women. I knew such a man. He had been a drunkard and everything that is bad, but one would never have guessed it by a casual meeting with him, for his influence now is pure and helpful. If you ask him the secret of the mighty change, he will tell you that Christ came into his life. And he will tell you further that he could never get along without the daily help which his Saviour gives to him. Faith and fellowship have made him a power for good, and his fellow-citizens thank God for the man whose shadow means so much to the moral strength of their city. A shadow like that is worth far more to the world than great wealth and high social position.

XXVIII

OUR HARD DAYS

A WHILE ago I went into a man's office. I knew him pretty well, and, as I looked into his face, I could see that he was suffering. So I said, "You do not look very well to-day." "No," he replied, "this is one of my hard days." Periodically he had an attack of pain which made life a very burden to him, and just then he was experiencing one of his hard days. There are some of my readers who know just what such hard days mean, and will have some sympathy with the famous preacher who was asked if he never doubted his soul's salvation. "Never," he said; but, being an honest man, he thought a second time and amended his statement: "Never—except when the East wind is blowing." Oh, some of us know all about the East wind—the dreary, neuralgic, rheumatic, narrow-searching, depressing East wind. Isn't it wonderful what a little change in the wind does for us?

Sometimes we have our hard days when we are physically tired. That is what we might expect. Have you not read of the Old Testament prophet, who became blue, very blue, so blue that he lay down, under a juniper bush and prayed the Lord that he might die? Do you remember how the Lord cured the blues that time? A good sleep, strengthening food, another good

sleep, more food, a chance to talk into sympathetic ears, assurance of God's care, and work, blessed work, to do—isn't that the story? And Elijah gathered himself up like a man and a hero, and put "the blues" amongst the forgotten things of his life.

Some folks are what they call temperamental. I do not know that I ever heard that expression from people who had very much to do. As I recall the days of my youth, I do remember some individuals who seemed to have pretty bad attacks of depression; but, in the Scottish atmosphere in which I lived, these attacks were very apt to be regarded as due to the fact that their victim had not enough to keep his mind and his hands busy. Now, that may not be quite fair to some sufferers from depression; but I fancy that there is so much truth in the diagnosis that it would be quite safe to treat, say fifty per cent. of the cases, upon that assumption.

Then there are cases of mental and spiritual reaction. It appears to be a law of the human soul that any season of great emotional strain is followed by a period of depression. Did you ever hear of "minister's blue Monday?" What do you think it is? Just this—the man who was on the mountain top on Sunday is away down in the valley, both physically and spiritually, on Monday. He needs rest, and after rest a spiritual vision. Then he will be all right.

Some anniversaries are hard days to many of us. Do you know I have been thinking of what a person said to me a while ago: "I just hate a holiday. I have nowhere to go, and nothing to do?" I wonder if we

crowded our sad anniversaries with duties, with loving service for others, they might not be a little easier to bear? Is not the anniversary hard largely because we allow our minds to dwell too much upon our troubles?

There are hard days which come upon us unexpectedly—days of special temptation, of unusual trial, of great physical and mental and spiritual strain. At such times we need "the grace that is sufficient" very sorely.

F. W. Boreham, the Australian religious essayist, whose writings are becoming known in America, tells that on one occasion during his student days he was conducting an anniversary service in a village in Surrey. He was entertained by an old lady, the widow of a former minister, and was given the room which she usually occupied. In the morning when he pulled up the blind and the sun shone into the room, he noticed a mark upon the glass of the window. At first he thought that it had been made with a fluid of some kind; but soon he discovered that it was cut into the glass. The inscription read, "This is the day—" At breakfast he asked his hostess concerning it, and she told him that she had cut it there herself. Her story was that, in her younger days, she was a great one to worry. She was always afraid of what was going to happen to-morrow. Every morning when she woke up she felt as though she had the weight of the world upon her. One day when she was much upset, she sat down to read the Bible. She was perusing the one hundred and eighteenth Psalm. At the twenty-fourth verse she stopped: "This is the day that the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." She exam-

ined the passage again to discover what particular day was referred to, but could not find out. Then it occurred to her that it means any day, every day—this day "This is the day that the Lord hath made." That is why the mark was made upon the glass—just to remind her each morning as the light flooded her chamber that God made the day. "Somehow," said the old lady, "you do not feel afraid of the day if you feel that He made it."

That story has helped a good many people, including myself. Of course I know that the text is generally regarded as having a reference to the Feast of Tabernacles; but, as I do not happen to be a Jew and have little interest in the Feast of Tabernacles, I find no little comfort stealing into my soul as I think of that old lady's interpretation. She may not be strong on exegesis, but she certainly possesses spiritual insight, and who will not say that spiritual insight outranks exegetical skill. So when my hard days come, I like to think that the Lord knows all about it, and that these days, which I find hard, all come within the sweep of His gracious purpose. Then I do not find it difficult to believe that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

XXIX

THE ESSENCE OF PROFANITY

NO! I am not writing about "cuss" words, lurid and expressive adjectives, capital letters and dashes, malign wishes couched in virile and forcible language—that is only a little sample of profanity but, to some folks, it is the whole thing. In our time the meaning of the word has been circumscribed, and its ancient significance has almost departed. It had its origin in the "fane" or temple. The "profanum" was the open ground in front of the sanctuary, land trodden by many a foot, soil over which the dogs of the city often passed, unhallowed territory as compared with the temple behind it. Esau is called in the New Testament a "profane person." I often used to wonder at the designation, for I have never been able to get rid of the feeling that he was a good-natured, impulsive child of the desert, the victim of a shrewd and scheming twin brother. If he used expletives regarded as profane in those days, we have no record of it. Probably he did, but his profanity apparently did not consist in the fact that he was an artist in the use of weird and vehement expletives, but in the other fact that he had no reverence in his soul. His was an open, unrestrained nature, unguarded by loving presences, across which the commonest passions like hunger ran

riot, unawed by any commanding principles. If he had lived in my boyhood days he would have sat in "the devil's corner" at the church service.

The other day a returned chaplain was telling me how he used to attend various churches just to see how the boys attended church when there was no compulsion in the matter. One day he dropped into a little church in the Bramshott area. A good many soldiers were present, and he soon discovered the reason. The preacher was a man of remarkable power. He was a Celt, a Scotsman, a poet by inheritance and a seer by nature. His text promised an address that would be far from ordinary: "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs." To the Jew, the preacher said, there was something very striking and picturesque in the saying. It recalled a glorious and great temple, the priests sacrificing some spotless lamb, and the dog, the coarse, cruel scavenger of the East, creeping up to the temple and the priest taking a piece of the pure and spotless offering and throwing it out to him. Such an act would be a scandal in those days. But we in our day have our holy things, and we should take heed that we do not throw them to the dogs. Most Highlandmen love a dog, but this preacher evidently felt that dogs have a very definitely circumscribed place in the lives of men. He went on to tell about the beauty of the maternal instinct. My friend says that the picture that he painted was wonderful in its charm, and the boys from Canada, thinking of their own mothers, found the tears coursing down their cheeks as the preacher depicted the tender, holy instinct that makes a good mother what

she is. Then, in the scathing tone of scorn, which is the peculiar possession of the Gael, he pictured a woman, childless by choice, lavishing that holy instinct upon a dog which lay in her arms. He says that these boys have a great dislike for Pomeranians since they heard that sermon.

I have told this story to suggest that there is a possibility of giving that which is holy to the dogs, of being profane, of pushing reverence out of life. I wonder if in these days of mass movements we are not in danger of forgetting the sacredness of conscience? We like to think of our ancestors, who were true to the inner monitor that continually urges us to seek the right, and when we have found it to do it. Sometimes, however, the individual, who is very faithful in obeying the dictates of his conscience, is very intolerant of those who do not interpret duty in the same terms as he. We must not forget that uniformity does not necessarily bring strength, and that the process of moulding all minds upon the same pattern may rob some of them of that which is their chief glory. If there is anything for which we need to pray more it is the power to appreciate another man's loyalty to conscience, even when our own views are decidedly opposed to his. If we have no reverence for the conscience of a good man, we may well ask if we are not profane; for is not the grandest sight in the world that of a man whose life is one long story of a conscience void of offence toward God?

Profanity is an attitude of mind, a temper of the soul, a way of looking at life and the things which

make up life. The profane man is not simply the blasphemous swearer whose oaths make us shudder, but many a respectable individual may be classified as devoid of the spirit of reverence, in other words, a profane man. There has been in the past a disposition to limit the test of the spirit of reverence to the church and its ordinances. If a man was outwardly devout within the sacred edifice, if he were outwardly serious in his relation towards the holy symbols, he obtained the reputation of being Christian and pious. Nowadays we are learning the lesson that Jesus taught long ago when, in that wonderful statement to the woman at the well of Sychar, He stripped away the special sanctity of places and things. "Neither in this mountain nor yet at Jerusalem shall men worship the Father." He laid the emphasis not on the place but upon the spirit of worship. The whole earth was holy ground to Him, and men could worship everywhere in spirit and in truth. This widening of the spiritual makes profanity of mind a much more possible thing. The man who can find God only in a sacred building is profane according to the mind of Jesus.

I wonder how the teaching of Jesus applies to the man whose soul has been a well trodden way for every worldly thought and desire and interest during the week. How can this man of the profanum be anything else upon the Lord's Day? He has not recognised God in his daily life. Once a week he appears in the place of worship with conventional gravity. He takes part in the worship of the congregation, and supports financially the organised work of the church. He obtains a

reputation for religiousness—I dare not say piety—but six days a week goes upon the principle that "religion is one thing and business another." He does not apply the principles of the Great Teacher to his dealings with his fellow-men. Such a man may be a member of a religious organisation, but I ask is he a religious man according to the standard of Christ? Is he not rather a profane person? Is he ever anything else than a profane person? The sanctity of the building and the sacredness of the ordinances do not change the nature of this child of the trodden way. They simply set in bold relief the real character of this visitor to the temple.

It is worthy of consideration whether the preacher does not often get the credit for being uninteresting when the trouble is not in the preacher but in the hearer. Long ago Jesus spoke of seed that was sown upon the roadway trodden hard by a thousand feet, and showed that under such conditions you could not expect much of a harvest. If we live in the atmosphere of the streets and crowd God out of our lives all the week, we need not expect when the church bells ring on the Sabbath morning to be able to recognise the Divine rule. If we go to service after a week in which God has not been in our thoughts, we shall seek what shall amuse us or distract us in the worship, not anything that will bring us nearer to God and make us more certain of His grace and presence.

The essence of profanity is to live as though God did not exist. It is to see nothing of value in life except what we can behold or touch or enjoy. It is to

disregard the soul's cry for God. It is to ignore the unseen and the eternal. By this definition of profanity we might discover that many very respectable people are profane persons.

XXX

FORESIGHT AND HINDSIGHT

A DOWN-EAST Yankee was discussing with a friend the business of a mutual acquaintance. The friend had remarked: "Jim always had a mighty lot of foresight. That's what helped him to get ahead. He always saw where a dollar was to be made, and he went after that dollar." "Yaas," drawled the Yank, "Jim has a mighty lot of foresight, but a leetle mite of hindsight wouldn't hurt him none." I wonder what that shrewd old fellow meant. Just listen. "Jim has the habit of forgettin' all the friends he had in the day when he was poor. He's rich now, because he's so foresighted; but Jim is hard, and he's gettin' harder. I tell you, Bill, that a leetle mite of hindsight would sweeten Jim some." In "The Pilgrim's Progress," Greatheart, while talking with Christiana's boys, remarks: "You must know that Forgetful Green is the most dangerous place in all these parts." Ah! there are some of us who know exactly what Greatheart meant. We must possess hindsight as well as foresight if we are to live gratefully, humbly and prayerfully.

When we turn to the Scriptures it is wonderful what emphasis is placed upon hindsight. "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of

Egypt, and the Lord thy God delivered thee." "Thou shalt remember all the way that the Lord thy God hath led thee these forty years in the wilderness." "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." These passages taken at random give a faint idea of the emphasis placed upon the faculty of looking into the past and drawing from it inspiration, cheer and comfort. Hindsight is a wonderful aid in developing gratitude of heart. John Newton, sailor, slave-trader, poet and preacher, a marvellous trophy of divine grace, after many wild and dissolute years, left the sea and entered the ministry. Over his study mantel he placed these words, inscribed in bold and compelling type: "Thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the Lord thy God delivered thee." When he became very old, he met his friend, William Jay, of Beth. Newton said that his powers were failing fast. "My memory is nearly gone," he said; "but I remember two things, that I am a great sinner and that Christ is a great Saviour."

There are many people who have a very strong prejudice against any one speaking freely in public concerning the dealings of God with the soul; and I have to confess that the spirit of some folks, who seem fond of being heard in public assemblies, does not appeal to me. But, after all, it is a fine thing to have something worthy of remembrance in respect of the divine dealings with us. It is that which keeps the soul tender and grateful. "My memory is nearly gone; but I can remember two things, that I am a great sinner, and that Christ is a great Saviour." Is not that a

magnificent starting point for any soul who desires to call up reasons for gratitude?

"Forget not all His benefits." An old homespun preacher once said in an abrupt fashion which made the words stick in the memory of his congregation: "You can't remember all of 'em; but don't forget all of 'em. Forget not all His benefits." Thanksgiving Day is upon us once more, and some of us will gather into churches to voice our thanksgiving to God for the abundant harvest and the many other blessings which have crowned the year. It would be most unfortunate if our day of thanksgiving was celebrated upon Forgetful Green; and so I am suggesting some reasons why my readers should be specially thankful. And we had better not start our meditation by singing the hymn with which Dan'l Quorm says one of his class leaders used to begin his meetings:

> " 'Woe is me! what tongue can tell
> My sad afflicted state!
> Who all my anguish can reveal,
> Or all my woes relate.' "

Dan'l says, moreover, that he was accustomed to follow the hymn up with what he called "a bit of a prayer." "But there wasn't a bit o' prayer in it from beginning to end. It was all a groan about how bad we were, and what miserable sinners we were. He never thanked God for anything at all, but this—that He had not swept us away 'with the besom of destruction.' " Farewell, then, to sighs and groans, and let us remember a few of God's wondrous benefits.

Did you ever thank God for the Christian home in which you were born; for the strong, sturdy, honest character of your father, and the gentle, pure spirit of your mother? Have you ever thought, with gratitude surging in your soul, of the quality of the teachers under whom you sat in school or college—the men and women who helped to give you the ideals that have moulded your life? Do you thank God occasionally for your friends and neighbours, who have been so true all these years? Do you remember, with some stirring of soul, the times when their sympathy and interest helped you over a hard place? How bare life would be if you had no friends? Do you thank God for a considerate employer? And, Mr. Employer, do you ever thank God for the workers who serve you so faithfully?

And your children! Your heart does get full as you think of them, doesn't it? You remember the first time you held the little helpless babe in your arms and realised that you were a parent. What a strange, solemn thrill there was in your soul! But the babe has become a man, and you have had all sorts of anxieties concerning him; but you would not want to lose all the joy the boy brought into your life, would you? Perhaps his body lies in Flanders fields, but what a proud and loving memory you have of your lad! And then you recall the fact that your dear wife was sick unto death not long ago; but she is with you still, and you feel that life is worth living since she is the home-maker. Perhaps you had a touch of rheumatism or something more serious last Spring, but

you're feeling better—at any rate you are here. Isn't that a reason for thanksgiving? Just recall your prayer of a few months ago. Were you not anxious to live then? And your life has been spared. Now raise your song of praise.

Ah! you say, it is all very well to talk about the things which you have mentioned. What about the high cost of living? Let me ask you, Have you a job in these hard times? Then thank God for that. Some other fellows haven't a job. And remember, too, that the H.C.L. may be necessary as a discipline for people who were becoming too extravagant, and were not using their money as a trust from God.

Let us also be grateful that the Empire holds together, and that the old ideals of righteousness, justice and brotherliness are swaying the Anglo-Saxon people as never before. Britain and her dominions have suffered much, but they have achieved much for the good of humanity. Are you not thankful to be a subject of such an Empire? I am.

And "God's in His heaven." His hand is on the helm of the universe. Because of that we are sure that "all's right with the world." Let us therefore raise with cheerful voice our thanksgiving to our Father in heaven; "for He is good and His mercy endureth forever."

XXXI

MARTHA, THE HOME-MAKER

I HAVE been interested in Martha of Bethany ever since the time when, as a wee laddie, I heard my mother take my ministerial father to task for exalting Mary to the disparagement of Martha. Her concluding remark was very effective. The dinner that day was unusually good, and father was enjoying it to the full. "It's weel for you that I'm no a Mary. If I were, my man, it's little tae eat ye wud hae this Sawbath Day." That settled father; but, from straggling remarks that he sometimes made, I surmise that he did not change his good opinion of Mary up to the day of his death, although he had no guarantee that she could cook. Perhaps he was like that other minister, who, when asked whether of the twain he should prefer as his wife, very diplomatically replied: "I should like Mary on the Sabbath, and Martha the rest of the week."

Martha has been a great conundrum to the preachers. They hardly know what to do with her. They like her because she is a good cook; but a goodly number of them seem to have an idea that that very fact is a proof that she is not very religious. An American author makes a declaration concerning that Bethany family, which has the merit of being somewhat novel: "Martha

is the ritualistic Episcopalian, proper, orderly, devout, reading her prayers out of a book, and worshipping in silence her acknowledged Lord. But Mary is inclined to be an unconventional Methodist, zealous, impulsive, careless of precedent, praying the prayer that springs to her lips from an overflowing heart; and expressing her gratitude in a most unexpected way." To complete the picture, Lazarus is offered as "the Presbyterian of the family, solid, sound, silent, philosophical." I suspect that a Methodist must have written that.

St. Teresa, who lived in the sixteenth century, and who is called by Dr. Rendel Harris, "the most practical and level-headed of the ascetical school of mystics," says: "Martha was a true saint though she did not achieve contemplation. What more could one wish than, like her, to have Christ often in one's house, and to serve Him, and to sit at His very table? Had Martha been rapt like Mary, who would have given the Lord to eat?" St. Teresa well knew the women who practice the cult of Mary. I think that she must have found some of them a little trying at times; and so she puts in a word for poor Martha—she is a saint, but has not reached a very high pinnacle.

All this is very interesting, but some of it is very far from the real point. In my judgment, Martha was a real home-maker. She and her sister Mary, together with their brother Lazarus, had a home at Bethany, a little village near Jerusalem. A very close friendship sprang up between Jesus and the family. The Homeless One found shelter, welcome, rest, with that Bethany family. It was the kind of home which

you are not afraid to visit without a formal invitation. On the occasion which furnishes preachers with material for a eulogy of Mary, Jesus went to Bethany with an escort of twelve disciples. It was the Feast of the Tabernacles, the greatest festival in the Jewish calendar, celebrating the deliverance from Egypt. It was also the feast of harvest. At that season every Jew kept open house for a whole week. It was a point of honour with the people that the entertainment should be as sumptuous as they could afford. However, the busy housewife must have felt consternation in her soul when she saw the most honoured friend of the family, Jesus Christ, walk in at the head of a dozen followers. She had her hands full enough without them. But she set to work to prepare a repast that should be worthy of the occasion and of her Lord. No trouble was too great. It certainly was very trying to note that Mary let household duties go hang, and to see her settle down to "visit." I think that Martha must have been rather tired. She had had a very busy week. Nerves will not stand everything. Something had to give way; and the thing that broke was Martha's temper.

When we get to this point we find that the translators of the King James' version of the Gospels have been rather unfortunate in the impression which they give of this good woman. When, in her flurry and irritation, she appealed to Jesus to bid Mary take part in the preparations for the meal, they represent our Lord as saying: "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things; but one thing is

needful; for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her." The revisers have a marginal reading: "But few things are needful, or one." (Luke 10:42.) Weymouth's translation says: "You are anxious and worried about a multitude of things; yet only one thing is really necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion and she shall not be deprived of it." That seems to clear up the misconceptions of some folks, who have an idea that the passage has a bearing upon personal salvation, and are inclined to relegate this busy house-wife to the company of those who know nothing of the deeper religious experiences. Does it not thrown light upon the courtesy of Jesus? He would not unduly add to Martha's burdens. A very simple meal, composed of a single dish is all that is necessary. He would not deprive Mary of her pleasure over being in His presence once more. She is not neglecting Him by not taking a hand in the cooking. Sympathy and fellowship are good things. He appreciates them, and would not deprive Mary of her gracious ministry.

Under ordinary circumstances I do not think that Martha would have said a single word in condemnation of Mary, but it is rather hard for a woman, who has at least thirteen guests at her table, Jesus at their head, to be patient when her sister takes no interest in household duties. After Jesus had pointed out that Mary was performing a real ministry to Him, do you fancy that Martha would have thought of asking her to serve in the kitchen? I trow not. She went back to the kitchen alone, and performed her duty faith-

fully, although, no doubt, she longed to be in the parlour just to listen to the gracious words which fell from the Saviour's lips. God bless the self-sacrificing Marthas, who, so often, have to forego their own pleasure for the sake of others.

"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus." I wonder why Martha's name comes first—practical, energetic, house-keeping Martha? Do you not think that He knew who made that Bethany home such a haven of rest? Do you not think that He saw that the home would not be so bright, and sweet, and comfortable a place to which even the Lord of Glory turned with delight, if big-hearted, capable Martha had not been its head? Jesus loved to go there because it was a resting place on life's weary road. It was home. And does not home mean everything that is sweet, and pure and helpful? God give us more Marthas.

XXXII

THE PRODIGAL'S BROTHER

I AM afraid that any preacher who sets out to glorify either the prodigal or his brother has missed the trail; for the purpose of our Lord's parable was not to call special attention to them, but to magnify the Divine grace and compassion. Right in the foreground of that wondrous word-painting is the figure of the eager, longing, compassionate, rejoicing father of both boys; and the joy in heaven over one sinner who repents is compared to the joy which that father experienced when the boy came back. When we have grasped that truth clearly we are quite safe in studying the character of a boy who never would have been mentioned, so some one has said, had not his prodigal brother, by his very badness, lifted the whole family from obscurity and bestowed upon them a world-wide reputation. Of course, the man who made that statement forgot that it was the prodigal's struggle to get right with his father, which brought undying fame to his family circle.

Isn't it wonderful how the prodigal fills the imagination of the majority of Bible students? In "Robert Falconer," George Macdonald makes the hero read the parable to the dying soutar: "There," cried the soutar, triumphantly, "I telled ye sae; O Lord, I am

comin' hame as fast as I can; but ma sins are just like muckle bauchles upon ma feet, and winna let me. I expec' nae ring and nae robe, but I wud fain hae a fiddle i' ma grup when the neist prodigal comes hame." It was the fiddle and the dancing which gave rise to the remarks of the elder brother respecting the ne'er-do-weel, that have led to such a discussion of his own character for, lo, these many years. My sympathies, however, are with the soutar in regard to the kind of reception which a repentant prodigal should receive.

There are many things which can be said on behalf of the elder brother. He appears to have been an industrious fellow. He stayed on the old farm even after the younger brother deserted it, taking with him every penny he could gather as his patrimony. Now that is worth remembering. He seems also to have been a hard worker. On the day when his brother returned from the far country, he was "in the field"—likely on the "lower hundred," so far away that the dinner-horn, or the bell on the driving shed, or a few shots from the old gun did not draw his attention to the fact that something unusual had occurred at home. It always struck me, when I was a lad, that it is rather peculiar that there is nothing in the story to indicate that the elder brother knew anything about the family reunion until he approached the house and heard the sound of the music and dancing. I have no very satisfactory explanation of this fact, but it may throw a side-light upon his character. He may have been such a worker that his men were afraid to inform him of his brother's arrival, lest they might get no thanks for

their pains. I do not think that he would order them to knock off work for half a day just because his scapegrace brother had returned. And do you know I have a suspicion that his father was just a little afraid of his first-born, and had the calf killed, the dinner going and the dance under way long before the good boy appeared upon the horizon? His actions upon his arrival at the house give good reason for the assumption that he was an uncharitable, proud, self-righteous, jealous, touchy, sulky, dogged individual. In very truth he was "the man who spoiled the music." "He was angry and would not go in."

It may be that some of my readers do not agree with me in my conclusions. They urge that the elder brother was a good son. I grant that—but with a reservation. I do not doubt for a moment that he was industrious, and that he gave a correct account of every copper that was received or spent on the old farm. No money was squandered under his management. He could point with honest pride to his record as a farmer. It was clean. He had been faithful to his trust. All that is in his favour. It is a great thing to be able to say as he did: "Lo, these many years do I serve thee, and I never transgressed a commandment of thine." It is very impressive to be able to point to our high moral standards, and to emphasise our purity of life by comparison with some poor unfortunate who has drifted so far down that he is little better than the swine that he feeds. But, when we have said all that, have we said the last word? I find poor Robbie Burns' words ringing in my ears:

"If I have wandered in those paths
Of life I ought to shun—
As something, loudly, in my breast,
Remonstrates I have done—
Thou knowest Thou hast formed me
With passions wild and strong;
And list'ning to their witching voice
Has often led me wrong.
Where human weakness has come short,
Or frailty stepped aside,
Do Thou All-Good—for such Thou art—
In shades of darkness hide."

There are some men who confront more temptation in half an hour than some others do in a whole lifetime. I think that the prodigal belonged to that class. The elder brother did not understand how hard it was for such a lad just to be good. I am confirmed in this view when I examine the context. There it is clear that the elder brother stands for the respectably religious Pharisees, while the prodigal represents the publicans and sinners—two types of character which are to be found in every age and clime. Have you not felt as you have read the story that you cannot love the good boy of the family? Why? Not because he is good, not because he is industrious, not because he possesses pardonable family pride, not because his soul burns with indignation over his brother's sins—you will justify and praise him for all that—but because the fellow seems to possess not a single particle of fraternal love and compassion. You cannot detect the faintest throb of a big brotherly heart that yearns over the wee laddie who has gone wrong. (You know the

little fellow is always a little chap to his elder brother.) You cannot help wondering if this big fellow ever, in all his life, yearned over the wee one. In many respects he is a fine man, but he lacks heart.

It is with great relief that we think of the father, to whom the thoughts of the bad boy turned in the hour of his deepest degradation and despair, and whose heart was tender towards the prodigal for no other reason than that he was his boy. How his soul was filled with rejoicing when he heard the trembling words of confession: "Father, I have sinned." How often we have thanked God for that story, because it gives us a glimpse of the Heavenly Father's heart; and that glimpse is so reassuring that the vilest sinner is encouraged to approach with the confession of the prodigal, but with a better plea than his—the plea that One died for sinners!

XXXIII

TEMPERS OF VARIOUS KINDS

ONE of the best stories attributed to Dr. Alexander Whyte, the great Scottish preacher, who has just passed away, concerns a Highland minister who visited Edinburgh in order to secure funds. Dr. Whyte gave him a list of possible contributors; and the Hielan' man went on quest in a dogged sort of way. One of the men on the list was a rich merchant, who apparently had more gold than grace. The sky pilot put his case tersely, but with little tact or cleverness. Very soon he was arguing heatedly, and the rich man asked indignantly, "What do you take me for?" Quick as thought came the reply, "A hell-deserving sinner like myself." That, of course, was the end of the appeal. Returning to Dr. Whyte, the Highland sky pilot told the tale. "You never said that?" queried the preacher. "Ay," replied the Highlander. "Well, well," said Dr. Whyte, "I've often wanted to tell him the same thing myself. Here's five pounds for you."

That story has suggested my subject. I suppose most of my readers have at one time and another heard a good deal concerning temper, and most of it has been of a condemnatory character. And yet, when you come to think of it, a great deal has been said of late years regarding the weakness, and inert-

ness, and cowardice of men who will take offence at nothing, not even a reflection upon their honour; will defend no one, not even their own mother; will be furious at no crime, enthusiastic over no cause, will fawn upon oppressors and be courteous to evil-doers. They have no self-respect, no resources of indignation —no flashpoint. Do you respect them? I do not.

I am aware that we are dealing with edged tools when we are discussing temper. Lately I have read the whole series of Mrs. Grace S. Richmond's books respecting Red Pepper Burns. They have a certain psychological interest for me. One of the most interesting studies in the life of the peppery doctor is the way in which he got control of his temper. He tried everything, amongst others, chopping down trees, and driving his high-power car at terrific speed. "Jord," he said, "you don't know it, but I can be a fiend incarnate." "I don't believe it," refused King stoutly. "It's absolutely true. When I get into a red rage I could twist a neck more easily than I can get a grip on myself." And yet, if we are to believe the writer, Red Pepper Burns' outbursts of wrath were generally occasioned by the wrongs which he beheld other folks suffering. He was a big-hearted, generous soul, and we love him for his very fieriness; yet he confesses that his temper leads him to do things that are unworthy of him, and cause him the deepest regret. "Years back, when I had a rush of blood to the head of that sort, I used to take it out in swearing until the atmosphere was blue; but I can't do that any more. I did it once too often—and the last time I sent a dying

soul to the other world with my curses in its ears—the soul of a child, Jord. I lost my head because his mother had disobeyed my orders, and the little life was going out when it might have stayed. When I came to myself I realised what I had done—and I made my vow. Never again, no matter what happened! And I've kept it. But sometimes, as to-night—Well, there's only one thing I can do: keep my tongue between my teeth as long as I can, and then get away somewhere and smash things until I'm black and blue."

I have no doubt that many of my readers will sympathise with the doctor in his fight for the control of that fiery temper. One of the weakest, most despicable attitudes to take towards a hot temper is to declare that it is an inheritance, for which we are not responsible. I have brown eyes and brown hair. I am not responsible for that. I am responsible for the use which I make of those eyes, and the tidiness of that hair. I cannot very well change their colour; but my temper is not in the same category as my hair. It has a moral quality. It can be trained. Some folks do not believe that. You can excuse a baby's cry of pain; but you certainly find it difficult to excuse the cry of temper. Any parent, who allows his child to work himself into a rage, and puts forth no effort to teach him self-control, is laying foundations for future trouble.

But it is not the man with the hot temper who is hardest to get along with. It is the sensitive fellow who always has a sore toe ready for somebody else to stumble over, and somehow has a feeling that every-

body is out with a searchlight looking for that toe. And they all find it. Of course, he feels hurt. Have you ever met the gentleman? I think that I should rather meet Red Pepper Burns at his worst than the fellow who is always getting hurt, who takes offence easily, who is continually telling how sensitive he is, and in plain English, is always playing the baby.

And the sullen temper! I am almost afraid to say much about that lest I should not be just. As a rule its professor has patience, and tenacity, and self-restraint in ordinary affairs; but let that sullen temper be crossed and it can scarcely be pacified. A hot-tempered man is usually generous towards those who have offended him. You rather pity the man who takes offence easily, and regard him with commiseration and sometimes with contempt. But the sullen fellow—does he not make your heart stand still at times, as you think of the hate and bitterness that he carries in his soul? He is far more likely to knife you than the hot-tempered man. He often will follow you for years just to get even. Some of the most tragic occurrences of human life are connected with men of obstinate, malign, bitter temper. It is a tremendous struggle for such men to show forth the Christian graces. Often you think that they will be amongst the number who are said to be saved "so as by fire." And yet there are mighty victories accomplished in the human breast. Once I congratulated a man upon his self-control in the face of great provocation. His reply was: "Once I could not have done it. I have a devilish temper. Nobody but God and myself knows how terrible it is.

I have prayed for help that I might be able to control it. I have honestly striven to repress it. To-day I was sorely tried; but I knew that, if I once gave way, I should say and perhaps do things that would reflect upon my credit as a man and a Christian, and I lifted up my heart for Divine help." That little glimpse into a good man's soul led me to feel that it is not so easy to be good as we sometimes think—in fact it is the biggest battle that is ever fought.

Do not be discouraged because you have a temper. You would not amount to much without one. Remember Jesus Christ. Did you ever notice this verse: "He looked round about on them in anger, being grieved at the hardening of their hearts?" Do you remember how the Master drove the traders out of the Temple? There is no sin about having a temper. The sin consists in not controlling it. Christ was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin that He might know how to succour them that are tempted. Mrs. Red Pepper Burns said: "Red, dear, why not bank the fires; . . . the fires are warming when they are kept under control." It is worth while praying, not that we should be deprived of temper, but that God should help us to bank the fires; for we have work to do, and power is necessary for its accomplishment. We daren't dissipate energy. Bank the fires!

XXXIV

SIMPLE FIDELITY

IT is said that Henry Ward Beecher was very fond of good horses. On one occasion he was admiring a fine specimen of the equine strain, and remarked to the owner: "This is a very fine horse, Mr. Smith." The reply came, "He is a fine horse, Mr. Beecher. That horse will go anywhere you put him, and will do anything that a horse can do." A smile broke over the tired preacher's face as he exclaimed, "I wish he were a member of my church."

Simple fidelity is a wonderful index of the quality of a man's character. It does not require great gifts and fine opportunities to produce faithfulness in the performance of the duties which come to our hand. Many a soul whom we pronounce as of very ordinary talent towers above his fellows when judged by the standard of simple fidelity. But what a compliment it is to an employé when the boss says concerning him: "Jim will attend to that; and you may depend upon it that it will be done right." My heart always warms towards a man of Jim's type, for I know that he possesses qualities that far outrate brilliance. He is one of the dependables that keep others sweet, and aid not a few to keep their faith in their fellowmen.

It seems to me that simple fidelity is not a natural

product. Heredity does a great deal for some folks, and we often say concerning a man: "He ought to be a good man. He had a very fine father." Yet there are instances in which a good father, like David, has a son like Absalom, who helps to cover the family name with shame. No doubt a father's moral struggles and victories react upon his children, but most boys must fight their own battles. That is why I regard fidelity in little things as being a moral growth rather than an endowment.

Fidelity is due very largely to early training. A child whose ideas of truthfulness and standards of duty will not bear investigation, will likely develop a very flimsy character. But let a child be taught in the good old-fashioned way what a terrible thing sin is, how God hates it, how it grieves His heart, hurts other people and is the secret of Calvary's cross; let that child know that sin hurts his own character, and that others will not trust him, nor can he hold their complete trust and affection until his weakness be overcome, and, in all likelihood, you will find him making an honest effort to be worthy of the trust of others, and, better still, to win the approval of his God.

The greatest weakness in present day teaching is the over-emphasis which is placed upon success; and success is judged in terms of notoriety and money. People want to be noticed and they desire wealth. For these things they often sacrifice that which makes life really great. Our children should be instructed how great is the worth of simple fidelity, no matter how unimportant are the duties which are laid upon them.

Fidelity is not always easy. Very often it is very difficult. Tasks are monotonous. Duties are unreasonable. We weary of the dreary round, and yet it is the faithful performance of duty, day in and day out, that develops the man who is as dependable as the Bank of England.

There are many reasons why men should be faithful, but we have not time to discuss them here. The greatest motive leading to fidelity is, no doubt, the claim of others upon us. Many years ago a British general in rallying his men cried: "Men, we must not fail. What will they say of us in England?" The call to remember the interests at home had much to do with gaining a victory which is one of the glories of the Empire.

I wonder if the Lord Jesus, in His wonderful prayer of intercession, did not reveal very clearly how much His disciples would depend upon His example as the ideal of the kind of life which they would be expected to live. They were facing things such as they had never encountered—experiences that would search their very souls—and Jesus, with the Cross in full sight, prayed concerning His followers: "For their sakes I sanctify myself that they themselves may in truth be sanctified." In that prayer, did He not remind Himself that were He to fail, to give way, there would be no reason left to those who looked to Him why they should be faithful and hold on? Their lives were bound up with His and their fidelity was dependent upon His fidelity.

George Eliot speaks of the dreadful sin of tearing

down the altar of trust in some other heart. It is well for all of us to remember that our failure to be faithful in the things entrusted to us may mean shipwreck to some other life, which, unknown to us it may be, is depending upon us for inspiration and courage to face life's hardest battles. We know by experience what a shock it is to wake up to the fact that a trusted friend has proved unfaithful. We have experienced the consternation, the dismay, the bewilderment of that hour. We remember the feeling that filled our soul: "There is no one that we can trust now." Everything seemed to have gone awreck. We should not like to repeat the experience. But we recall with what satisfaction our heart finally decided: "There are two whom I can trust still—God and Mother," and that was the beginning of a new faith in Divine and human character. Other souls may have to face a similar struggle; but if we have any altruism in our natures, we must shrink from being the occasion of another man's fight in the darkness to recover faith in his fellow-men. Far grander is it to be simply faithful, performing the duties of life with strict fidelity, and even although we do occupy a very important place in the eyes of our fellows to have the assurance of conscience that we have done our best. Then our friends may look back upon us with the feeling of comfort which the old text expresses: "A man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

"What is the Bible the world is reading?
Your daily life and mine.
What are the sermons the world is heeding?
Your daily life and mine.
What are the creeds that the world is needing?
True lives, yours and mine."

XXXV

THE SURPRISE OF APPRECIATION

ONE day, not a great while ago, I met a man from the Old Land who had just arrived in Canada. He was not fitting in at all, but, of course, I had to be polite, and, as a consequence, inquired how he was getting on. The answer was one that I had never heard from the lips of a Canadian: "Oh, not very well, sir. The boss does not appear to appreciate me." I wanted to laugh, but didn't. Instead, I just asked: "Have you been telling him how you do things in England?" and the answer came, "Well, yes, I have." "How did he take it?" "Not very well. In fact, he did not seem to like it at all, and said some nasty things about the Old Country." But a day or so later I met the fellow again and there was hope in his face. Before I had time to ask any question, he broke out with, "I'm pretty sure the boss appreciates me. He said some very kind things to me this morning. I shall get on now, I am sure." During the few minutes that I spent in his company the whole theme of his conversation was "the boss," and his appreciation. It filled his horizon. It made his tongue sing with joy, and gave to Canada a new beauty and a new promise.

There are some tragedies due to the fact that appreciation is not expressed as freely as it should be. Many

a time domestic troubles might be averted if husbands and wives had the bump of appreciation developed to a greater degree. Once while I was doing some pastoral visiting I inquired of a lady how she and her husband were getting along with a little girl that they had recently adopted. And the answer came: "We just love her. She is a most appreciative child. William just loves her, and she loves William. You would think that they were father and daughter." And the little girl came along the street, and laid hold of her "papa's hand," and rubbed her wee cheek upon it, and the man's eyes grew tender, for you know that it is a wonderful experience to have a lovable little girl looking up into your face and calling you her daddy.

One night I was sitting with a man who had been unfortunate in business. He was blue, very blue, and when I spoke of how the community trusted him, his eyes filled. He said, "Please tell me that again. I had thought that I had lost the confidence of the community. You know that would be an awful experience. If people did not regard me as an honest man, of what value would be my Christian testimony? A castaway! I would hate to be that." And with a big lump in my throat, I said, "Man, you are anything but that. Folks trust you, man!" And the poor fellow said, "You really think they do, do you?" And what could I do other than to make my assertion as positive as possible, for another man's soul-comfort depended upon my answer? I just wish that I could see him again, for I have been reading the Gospel of Matthew since then, and a little bit of its spirit, I trust, has

come into my soul. Matthew had a great "feel" for just the word that will comfort. Just read the last paragraph of the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel and permit its wondrous suggestiveness to stir your soul: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, I was hungered, thirsty, naked, a stranger, sick and in prison." "Lord, when saw we Thee?" "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye did it unto me." A number of years ago I heard of a mother who was close to the gates, but, like many another soul, she felt that she had done but little for her Lord, and she did not like to go empty-handed. She had a large family of growing children, and they had taken every effort of mind and heart and body. A tear trickled down her cheek and was noticed by her baby boy. With that almost uncanny insight so characteristic of childhood, he seemed to understand what was passing in his mother's mind, and, climbing onto the bed, whispered, "Mamma, just show Jesus your hands." Looking down, the sick woman got a glimpse of broken finger nails and stained fingers, indicative of the kind of life she had been living. "Just show Jesus your hands." Yes, she would, for He knew, and she would bring the proofs before His memory once more and tell Him that she had tried to be faithful to duty. She passed out in peace, for she was confident that her Saviour would be just towards His little one who had tried to be true.

When I become blue, that story comes back to me sometimes, and it comforts. Some of us have not a very great deal to offer to our Lord, but we have en-

deavoured to perform the day's work faithfully, we have tried to be true and honest and kind, we have aimed at doing our best for Him—alas! the life-record is such a puny handful! But it cheers us to remember that the Great Judge is thinking of more than flowers. He remembers the efforts that His people put forth to please Him. He remembers the aim, and the fidelity. We do not need to be afraid to show our hands.

Let me tell a story concerning one of the most faithful men I ever knew, who, however, lacked a little something in his religion to make it attractive and him useful in personal work with men. One night he came to see me and opened up his soul in the fashion that one man has with another. He told me about his hopes and aims in life, told me about his conversion, his church connection, and his desire to see other men brought into the Kingdom. And then he let fall a word that opened up to me the sight of a soul's longing. Said he, "Pastor," for it was in the days that I was a pastor, "sometimes I feel that I would give my last dollar if only I had evidence that I had led one soul to Christ." Well, that night I tossed upon my pillow and wondered why such a good man as I knew my friend to be, should not have the soul-winner's joy, and I am not ashamed to say that my heart was lifted upon his behalf. The following evening a man dropped into the manse. He was seeking membership in the church, and, when I asked what led him to the Saviour, he told me that my discouraged friend had been the means of his conversion. Those were not the days when the telephone was universal, and it was cold

Winter weather. I had to watch for my man. When I called him in and told him the story that I had heard the night before, the surprise upon that man's face was wonderful. Many times afterwards he said, "I cannot describe the joy that filled my soul. Somehow I could not help feeling that God appreciates my work for that man. Pastor, there are times when I wake up at night, and think of the time when we shall all meet in the glory land, and I think the Lord will see John and me walking about the streets of gold and will say, 'Well, William, you did a good day's work that day when you brought John into the kingdom,' and I will say, 'The best day's work I ever did. There is no joy like the joy of soul-winning.' "

XXXVI

THE APPEAL OF THE CHILDREN

IF there be any tenderness in the nature it is aroused by the appeal of childhood. We have known grouchy old fellows, who were popularly supposed to have no kindness and benevolence in their natures, who simply became transformed in the presence of a little child. An old woman in a great city of the old land, who had won an unenviable reputation in police circles, was noticed by an officer to pick up something on the street and conceal it in her apron. Approaching her, he demanded to see what she had there. It was just some broken glass which, shamefacedly she said, she had picked up because she was afraid it might injure the feet o' the bairnies. Love for children is the cord which binds many a man and woman to home, and decency, and hard work.

In the *Honan Messenger* there was a story told regarding a Chinese mother. With her husband and two daughters, nine and twelve years of age, she lived in a village at the mouth of the coal mines, fourteen miles from the city of Wuan. When the famine came down upon the land last Winter, this section of the country had already felt the cruel pinch of want since the previous Summer. The man was soon suffering from famine fever. He lay ill for months. Bit by bit

everything they owned was sold. There was nothing in the home with which to buy even one ounce of bread. The poor mother knew not what to do. She must sell one of her daughters or the whole family would starve to death. There was one alternative and only one. Can you imagine what it was? To be sold herself—to be sold as the wife of another man, to go and live with him and never have her children again. She chose this alternative. A relative of the husband attended to the transaction. The poor woman was sold for eleven Mexican dollars—about six dollars in gold. The sick man gave his consent. It would put off the day of starvation a little longer. So the mother went away, leaving the girls to care for their sick father. The price of her sacrifice kept the family for two months; and once more there was nothing to eat. It was just at that juncture that the Presbyterian missionaries opened up relief work in that district. The family will not starve now; but it is a family of only three. The mother who gave herself to save her loved ones cannot return to them.

The friend who sent me that Chinese paper had marked the story which I have just told, knowing that it might appeal to me. As I looked over the little journal I discovered many things that lay hold of the sympathies of any child-lover. For example, there is the story of three wee mites who, on a bitter Winter day, are left by their parents in the only home they have—a mud hut with no window and no door, only walls and a roof. The parents are away begging, and these little tots creep out into sunshine to catch, if pos-

sible, a little warmth from it. The picture which Mrs. G. M. Ross paints of these little ones following the sunny spot around that mud-hut and then, when the sun went down, creeping into their comfortless abode, is enough to make any child-lover sob in sympathy. You feel a wondrous kinship with the Chinese woman, who took some of her own bedding over to the hut, for, as she said, "I could not sleep for thinking of those crying children."

But it is a far call from Canada to China; yet the sobbing children in that far-off land remind me that we have many children at home who need to be fathered and mothered. Social service workers have lately told the people of Ontario that it is becoming increasingly difficult to obtain homes for the children entrusted to them. Many of these little ones have no parents. Most of them would have been better had they never known father or mother. None of these little ones is responsible for the sad case in which they find themselves. The Children's Aid Society is doing the best that it can for them. Experience, however, has clearly demonstrated that institutional training is not the ideal life for a child. If the best in the child is to be developed, it will be called out only through maternal and paternal love, sympathy and teaching. It is that which the Children's Aid Society is appealing for. As far as money is concerned, the society is not so badly off. She has "Old Man Ontario" to fall back upon. But heart-love, and the sacrifice which springs therefrom, are not to be purchased with money. They are priceless.

A home does not require to be very ambitious to become the dwelling-place of a little child. The Lord of Life and Glory did not disdain a stable and a manger. I fancy that, when he was a laddie, he was quite pleased to be known as "the carpenter's son." Some of our great men to-day were born in very humble homes indeed. It is the heart-welcome which the child receives that makes the home. I have been wondering whether, amongst the readers of these Meditations, there may not be a motherly heart here and there which would welcome the opportunity of mothering a child for the child's sake, for the sake of Ontario, and for the sake of the Saviour who once was a child.

Every Sabbath that I am able to get to church I meet a lady, who, some time ago, adopted a little girl. The child is an attractive youngster, strong, healthy and full of energy. She can think of more mischief than her "mother" ever dreamed of; but that little one has wrapped herself around that woman's heart. Do you think that she would give her up now? Not if I am a fair judge. When she adopted that little girl, she did it under a deep conviction that the Lord had given her that work to do for Him. She was almost afraid to attempt it, for, like all children, the little one was "a bunch of possibilities" and some of these possibilities bulked very large and very forbiddingly in her mind. She has given unsparingly of her love and her toil to the child. And the child is returning it. Her "mamma" has a wonderful place in her wee, generous heart, and her "papa" is a real papa to the bairn, who, so short a time ago, did not know a parent's love.

I am not suggesting that any of my readers should do as that woman has done because it is an easy thing. It is a difficult task. It means putting aside a good many things that you would like to do, the sacrifice of a great many of your little home comforts, the breaking up of some of your quiet evenings, the diminishing of the savings account a wee bit—BUT it will expand your heart. It will bring childish laughter into your eyes. It will keep you young. It will bring into your soul a sense of satisfaction; for the love of a child is a wonderful pillow upon which to lay one's head in view of the old age that will inevitably come. Let me apply the words of Pharaoh's daughter to the mother of Moses in a sense which is somewhat different to that which she intended: "Take this child away and nurse it for me and I will give thee thy wages." I wonder, my reader, if the voice of the Christ, who was once a child, may not be speaking to you in your childless home on behalf of some wee bairn who needs a heart to mother and father him.

XXXVII

THE PERVERSITY OF HUMAN NATURE

A GREAT deal of the trouble that is in the world, a certain writer tells us, is due to "natural cussedness," and no doubt that is true; for it seems to be a very common complaint that, forbid a child to do a thing and that is the very thing he wants to do. The first attempt to introduce potatoes into France was due to a well known scientific authority named Parmentier. This was in the 17th century. He imported some of the plants, set them out in a field near Paris, and by means of learned pamphlets and talk with people, tried to have the new vegetable brought into cultivation and the market. But it was all in vain. Potatoes did not prove attractive; and, when the planted ones matured, it seemed that they would rot in the ground on account of the prejudice against them. Then some wise man, who knew human nature—a student of psychology with practical ideas—suggested that peasants could not be made to try potatoes by persuasion, but might be led to adopt them if they were forbidden to eat them. His idea was adopted. Many signs were erected in plain sight, forbidding, under severe penalties, any one from taking any potatoes from the field. The peasants at once began to raid

the hills, and, before long, most of the ripe tubers were stolen and eaten with a relish.

Some years ago Toronto had a Mayor who was noted for his sturdy independence. Before he was the occupant of the Mayor's chair, one day he was driving along King Street and came to Don bridge. There he saw a notice something to this effect: "Any person or persons driving over this bridge at a faster pace than a walk will be prosecuted according to law." He drove over. At the end of the structure, he deliberately turned round, thundered over that bridge at a two-forty gait, met a constable at the other end, and had to give his name and appear in court next morning on a charge of violating one of the city by-laws. He said that that notice made him mad. However, that was not what got him off. He contended that a bridge is part of the public highway, and should be strong enough to stand any traffic allowed upon the street, no matter at what rate of speed it is driven.

Recall your youth and you will remember what sport it was just to get a chance to rob the orchard of some old curmudgeon, who thought that a fierce dog was a guarantee of undisturbed possession of a few little sour apples. Did ever sweet apples taste as sweet as those which we as boys ate at a safe distance from the old man, but which, we informed him, in very lurid terms, were grown upon his lot? And the fishing! Did any boy ever find greater delight than in trespassing upon a lot upon which a notice against trespassers was placed? And do you remember how we used to go swimming in forbidden places, and, when a con-

stable appeared, tied our clothes in a bundle, put it upon our head, swam across the river, and then placed the thumb of scorn to the nose of contempt, greatly to the wrath of the said constable and to the delight of our boyish companions. These were great days, because a boy is naturally a sort of outlaw.

There is a story told of two farmers, each of whom had a big family of girls. One family had inherited a double portion of good looks, the other was rather plain in appearance. But the homely family all married off, long before the other girls appeared to be thinking of matrimonial experiments. But if they were not, their father was. He paid a visit to his neighbour and said: "Look here, Smith, how is it that all your girls have got married, while mine, who are just as smart as yours, and a good deal better looking, are all at home yet?" "Well," answered Smith, "let me ask you a question, Jones. How do you treat the young fellows when they call round at your place?" "Just as well as I can. I tell them where to tie up the horse. Often I put the animal in the stable and the buggy in the driving shed. I always tell the girls to see that the young fellow is well fed before he takes the long drive home. Sometimes I actually keep him all night." "Let me tell you a story," said Smith. "One year I had a lot of peastraw which no animal around the place wanted to eat. The horses refused it, the hogs wouldn't touch it, even the sheep rejected it. I carted it out to a field, intending to let it rot for fertilizer, but I found the cattle and horses that were pasturing in that field, tramping it under foot. So I

built a big stake and rider fence round it. Next morning in they were again. I fixed the fence afresh, but again it was broken down; and, do you know, Jones, before Spring all that peastraw had been eaten. Now when a young fellow begins to spark one of my girls, I treat him as mean as I can. I order him off the place, set the dog on him, get out the old gun and threaten him with instant death, order the girl to have nothing to do with him, and, Jones, very soon there is an elopement. Now I have five as nice sons-in-law as any man in five counties; for there is nothing a man wants as bad as the thing he thinks somebody else wants to keep him from getting."

Probably I have said sufficient to illustrate the perversity of human nature. The demands of law stir up the rebellion that is latent in the soul. In an old book which we call Genesis, there is a story regarding the origin of sin. Satan is said to have asked our first parents: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" And the woman said: "Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die." And that old story goes on to show that the tempter used the perversity of human nature to destroy the first human pair, and thus to poison human nature at the very fountain.

When I was a boy I used to wonder why the Saviour did not come many centuries before His glorious advent. As the years go by I am learning that it takes a great while to convince any human being that he is a

sinner—by that I mean, not an imperfect individual, but a hell-deserving sinner. The vast majority of people begin to justify themselves. That sort of thing took its rise, according to the Genesis story, away back in Eden. Adam, poor miserable soul that he was, put all the blame upon his wife, and Eve blamed the serpent, and so it has been all down through the ages. Men blame their heredity, their surroundings, their companionships, their wives; yes, even God himself. I am a great admirer of Robbie Burns, but I always felt that he endeavoured to excuse his lapses from virtue in his "Prayer in the Prospect of Death":

> Thou know'st that Thou hast formed me
> With passions wild and strong;
> And list'ning to their witching voice
> Has often led me wrong.
> Where human weakness has come short
> Or frailty stepped aside,
> Do Thou, All-Good—for such Thou art—
> In shades of darkness hide.

Poor Robbie tried to lessen his responsibility by pleading that God had made it easy for him to sin.

There is no doubt that the purpose of the Ten Commandments was to impress the Jews with the fact that the human heart is in rebellion against God. Paul says: "By the Law is the Knowledge of sin. Yea, I had not known sin but by the Law." He tells us that he went on in the confidence that he was a pretty good man; as "touching the deeds of the Law," he was blameless. But one day he learned that the Law searches not only deed, but motives. There is a com-

mand, "Thou shalt not covet," and Paul's conscience, being in good working order, began to make him very miserable. "Sin revived and I (the self-satisfied, the faultless) died." Then a poor sinner needed a Saviour, and the Lord of Glory seems to have made a special trip to the earth to bless the Man of Tarsus. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?" "Who art Thou, Lord?" "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" The purpose of the Divine law is to lead sinners to realise their need of a Saviour.

XXXVIII

THE RELIGIOUS PERIPATETIC

MANY years ago a gentleman in Athens taught a certain system of philosophy as he walked with his pupils in the Lyceum there, and ever since then that system has been known as the peripatetic philosophy or the walk-about system. I was going to place at the head of this article, "The Religious Gad-about," and then I thought that perhaps the word "peripatetic" might appear a little more dignified to some of my readers, and so I made the change. But words mean little. A rose by some other name smells just as sweet, and changing the name by which some things are called does not make them smell pleasanter. So you are free to call the man under discussion what you like, peripatetic or gad-about, it makes no difference, provided that you clearly understand that he does not seem to value a church home, but has some of the instincts of the religious tramp.

There are a few people in the world who love change. They cannot live in one house long, nor continue in one employment, nor live with one wife. The monotony of it gets upon their nerves. They want a change. There is a story told of two Scots who were attending the funeral of the wife of a third. Said Number One to Number Two: "What are ye greeting

aboot, Jamie? She's nae relation of yours?" And Number Two replied: "That's jist the tribble. Everybuddy's getting a change but me." When these people are classed religiously they are popularly known as "floaters," and constitute the bulk of the multitude which the churches are making such desperate efforts to attract to service. The religious advertisement owes its origin to the people who love to roam.

It must be said that the average Protestant denomination does not offer to the worshipper any great change in the character of the sermonic work that is presented to the local congregation. The minister is expected to do all the preaching, as well as to do the pastoral work and to run a lot of machinery that increases in volume and complexity as the years go by. Some ministers will never make anything but very mediocre preachers, yet they have to sweat in the pulpit Sabbath after Sabbath, conscious of the fact that the people are bored by the sermon. But they love the pastoral work, and the people say: "I know that he is not much of a preacher, but he is a splendid pastor. I shall never forget how he came to our house when we were in trouble; he was a great comfort, for he seemed to understand just what we were going through. We can stand the poor sermons on Sunday, for the sake of such a pastor during the week." That is a beautiful tribute to a minister. Yet the Roman Church manages a little better, I fancy. She has great orders of preachers—Jesuits, Dominicans, Franciscans, Paulists, and, at certain seasons of the year, these men visit parishes all over the land, and the people hear preaching that is

the talk of the parish for months afterwards. How many little rural churches the different Protestant denominations have, which scarcely once a year hear a sermon from any one else than their minister. Is it any wonder that some folks get the "wanderlust," the desire to roam, because they are tired of the same way of putting the truth, tired of the same voice, and tired of the same face? They want a change.

Now, all the religious gadabouts in our cities have not the excuse that I have offered for the man who leaves his church home occasionally. The fact is that there are some preachers of such calibre that the congregation is disappointed whenever they are called away over Sunday, and is not anxious that the minister shall be away much, for nobody can take his place, so they say. The trouble seems to be that the very riches of pulpit wealth spread before the public leads people to wander from church to church seeking to get rather than to give. The church descends in their minds from the high function of service to the much lower one of entertainment. They ignore all the work that she does during the week and on the Sabbath except the one thing that appeals to their æsthetic or emotional or scholarly instincts—they demand good preaching. Of course, their definition of goodness differs according to the type of man who undertakes to expound what good preaching is. In the majority of cases it will be found that the gadabout likes entertainment above everything else.

The gadabout is a great problem. He is what may, in perfect justice, be called a religious parasite. If he

has any social religious life, it is maintained at the expense of others. The church organisation, which is behind the Sabbath service which he deigns to honour occasionally with his presence, is kept up through the labours and gifts of others. The men whom he delights to hear were educated very largely by the sacrifices of the denomination which he avows he is not connected with, but upon whose services he is only an occasional attendant. The coin which he so modestly places in the plate would not get him admission to a picture show; yet he would feel greatly disturbed in mind if he did not have a fine seat in the house of God. He does not give to charities or to missions. He takes no office in church nor Sabbath school. He ignores the prayer meeting as if it had no claim upon him. He does not pray for the minister, even in private, for he has no personal interest in him. He is out for entertainment. It is impossible to build up any kind of an organisation with a crowd of religious peripatetics as material.

When the gadabout is a family man the problem is accentuated. He has no family pew. His children are not taught to go to church and Sabbath school. Often when a visitor calls and asks what is his church preference he tells that it is so-and-so, but, if it is, it must be by inheritance, and apparently the inheritance is not valued very highly, for it is seldom referred to except to evade responsibility. The gadabout parent is responsible for the irreligious child, and the irreligious child is very soon the delinquent child, who figures so much in our children's court. Yes, when the church tie

is broken, and poor gadabout runs from one place to another trying to entertain his uneasy soul he is doing the very thing that will destroy family religious life. The family altar will break down, the conversations concerning the sermons will become mere criticisms, the songs that were sung as part of the worship will be torn to pieces under the sharp tongues of the young gadabouts, and the total effect of the roving tendency will be unhappy. I have over and over again seen families that were gracious in many respects develop into an order of religious bone-pickers as a result of their peregrinations from one church to another.

Moreover, it appears to me that the gadabout is responsible, in some measure at least, for lowering the standard of preaching, especially in the churches in districts that are regarded as downtown. No doubt it is very difficult to keep the church doors open under downtown conditions. All sorts of schemes are devised to help the situation. Gadabout usually demands a maximum of entertainment with a minimum of religion, and, as a result, there are some preachers who have given way before his insistence. Oh, the pity of it! I wonder if we might hear the Master give His verdict regarding some of our Sabbath evening services, whether the big crowd would be regarded as of as great importance as what we do with it.

To a mere newspaper man it appears that if we had a little more of the authority of the prophet in the messages which we listen to from Sabbath to Sabbath, a little more brotherliness in the treatment which the stranger receives from the regular worshippers in the

congregation, a little more insistence upon the soul's personal obligation to Jesus Christ, a greater opportunity for personal service in pushing on the work of the Kingdom, a home atmosphere in every congregation, we should soon eliminate the gadabout and transform him into the servant of others, a man who rejoices to have a church home, and to make it attractive, not simply to his brethren, but to the stranger who may chance to sojourn within its gates.

XXXIX

THE LORD'S CALF

THERE is a story told concerning a farmer who had a cow that presented him with twin calves, an event very unusual in cattledom. They were beautiful calves, too, and the farmer was as proud of them as the good old bossy that mothered them. In fact, the farmer was more than proud—he was grateful, so he said, to the Giver of all good for the unexpected addition to his herd of cattle, and promptly dedicated one of the calves to the Lord's cause. But he could not easily decide which one should belong to Him, and he determined to wait lest he should keep the best for himself, and so give the meaner gift to the work of God. The weeks went by and the calves grew. There were no finer animals in the whole county, and there was no prouder cattle-owner than the farmer. He used to lean over the old rail fence and watch them with delight. He would stroke their soft noses and pat their well-covered ribs. He even went the length of selecting names for them. One was to be Daisy and the other Rosy; but they were as alike as two peas; and he was afraid that if he ventured to name them he would have to hang a big placard from their necks, for at a distance he could not tell Daisy from Rosy. The Lord, too, should have the best calf, and His calf should have

the best name. He was not sure which name was the nicest, for once he had a horse named Daisy, which took the blue ribbon at the township fair, and he had a cow called Rosy, that took a prize in a butter-fat contest. So matters went on for about three months. More and more the farmer delighted in his young stock, more and more he looked into the future, and saw visions of wealth from the activities of Rosy and Daisy. But one night, while the twin calves were lying by the side of their mother in the pasture field, a thunderstorm came on, and one of them was struck by lightning. Next morning the owner—to his grief and disappointment, discovered poor bossy stiff and cold. Hastening to the house to confide his grief to the partner of his joys and sorrows, he unburdened his soul in these words, "Oh, Mary Ann, the Lord's calf is dead!"

It is wonderful what hard luck the Lord has in business affairs. Have you ever noticed that, whenever people are unfortunate in money matters and have to retrench, they begin by cutting down their giving to religion and charities? It is the story of the Lord's calf over again. I wonder if the present agitation to close the churches on account of the fuel situation, while the theatres, movies, poolrooms, and other places of amusement are to remain wide open, is not another instance of the hard luck of the Lord in regard to His business interests? It is strange how the Lord's calves get into spots where the lightning strikes, and strikes to kill.

Have you ever marked the fact that there are not a

few folks who find the Sabbath Day very convenient as a day of rest, and declare that they are too tired to go to church? I wonder what they were doing on Saturday night? Isn't it surprising how many of these same people will stay up late on the seventh day of the week at dance, or card party, or theatre, and then are too tired to attend the House of God on Sunday morning? Sometimes I have questioned whether the old Jewish legislation regarding the hour when the Sabbath commences might not be wisely adopted in these days; for, if the rest-day begins at sundown in the evening, the people are more likely to be ready for worship in the morning. Now we make the night before our rest-day the most strenuous of the week, and we are tired out before we face the duty of public worship. The Creator, in His wisdom, appointed one day in seven as a rest-day, and worship was combined with rest. There are some folks who make the Sunday the busiest of all the week; there are others who leave out the element of worship and who make the rest-day the laziest of all the seven. They are both extremists. The Lord's calf has met the lightning somewhere.

There are some fellows who are great secret society men. One would conclude from the number of emblems that they carry on the lapel of their coats that they were in the jewelry business. Now, I am not out to hit secret societies, for I belong to several, and am glad to testify to the nobility of their teaching and the unselfishness of their deeds. But I have neither met any thinking society man who would dare to say that the lodge can take the place of the church. At the

very best it supplements the work of that Divine institution. But isn't it strange that some fellows, when they are crowded with engagements during the week, are apt to sacrifice the prayer meeting rather than the lodge. I wonder if the Lord's calf didn't get it in the neck that time.

I have noticed also that when some men are prospering in business they find that the Lord's calf is not so fortunate. You see they have not time to look after her, and you know there does come a time when poor old Mooley cannot do it all. Do you not remember when, as a boy, you had to hold the milk pail while the calf drank? Do you not remember her mooing at the bars? Don't you remember your youthful rage when she "bunted" and the milk filled your eyes and covered your hair, and, worst of all, splashed onto a new necktie which cost twenty-five cents, a sum not to be despised in those hard times? Yes, the calf had to be fed. She must be looked after, even if boyish finery did suffer, and boyish temper was made keen by the "cussedness" of that "critter." And the Lord's calf needs looking after. Some men find it a great trial to keep up the Sunday school class that they promised to teach, to attend the church managers' meeting, to be on hand to usher on the Lord's Day, in fact, to fill any office at all in the church. "Why, confound it all! Don't you see that I'm covered with milk from head to foot feeding my own calf? I'm tired of the cattle business. I'll feed no more calves. Let the Lord's calf moo for somebody else, or else starve to death!" Poor calf!

How the family altar suffers from this spirit! How easy it is to find excuses for neglecting duty! But the commonest excuse of all is lack of time. I am perfectly aware that there is something in that excuse, for we are living in a strenuous age, and it is almost impossible to gather the family before the father has to go out in the morning. But what about the evening, immediately after the meal? Why not read a few verses, lead briefly, and have the whole family join in the Lord's Prayer? Why not have another season of family worship on the Sabbath morning, when singing might be introduced, and the service be a little longer? What this country needs is family religion. A returned chaplain says that he never knew a lad to forget decency and honour who had a Christian home and a Sunday School behind him. It is remarkable what the memory of home religion does for a youth. But, my friend, I wonder if you are letting the Lord's calf starve to death.

And yet was the farmer right in designating one calf as the Lord's? Were not both the Lord's? Are we not stewards? Does anything belong to us absolutely? Have we not to give account of not simply one but both calves? There was a man once, who was very proud of his possessions, and, looking ahead, saw great wealth coming his way. He had forgotten God and God's interests. "And the Lord said, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Would it not be a very embarrassing situation to explain that, in our anxiety for the welfare of our calf,

we had let its twin die, or that we had forgotten that both calves belong to God, and that we must face the reckoning? My little parable, in a single sentence, amounts to just this: Do not forget that God has as great interests involved as you have; and make your life count, so that He may not lose through the manner in which you conduct your business and His.

XL

SPEAK TO YOUR MINISTER

THE other day a minister, who took it for granted that I have a warm place in my heart for the men of the cloth, hinted that it might be well to discuss the subject which is at the head of this chapter. Immediately I recalled a story concerning a man, whom I knew in the days of my youth. He had been an important individual in the community many years before I knew him—a member of the old Parliament of Canada, before Confederation. He had, however, fallen upon evil days, and people had forgotten his former greatness. However, he had not, and, on every occasion on which he could push himself into prominence, he did so. The church which he attended was holding anniversary services one Sabbath, and Bro. Smith was present. The officiating minister was a stranger who knew not Joseph, but, as soon as he descended from the rostrum, he was met by Smith, ex-M.P. "Bro. Jones, Bro. Smith." The visiting cleric looked the brother over, sized up his general character at a glance, and asked, "Brother Smith, are you a member of this church?" "W-e-l-l, no," replied the truthful Smith. "Then are you one of the Lord's poor, or are you one of the devil's poor, or are you the poor devil?" I heard Smith say that he was never so "flab-

bergasted" in his life. "One of the Lord's poor, or one of the devil's poor, or the poor devil? Men, I have been thinking over it all week, and 'pon my word I can't answer that question yet." Now, I do not desire to get anybody into the position of Smith, ex-M.P. but I do wish to emphasise the importance of speaking to your minister.

One day a while ago I was talking to a man who told me that he had no use for his minister. "Why?" said I. "He never knows me on the street." "Well, now," I said, "that is too bad. How often do you go to church?" "Oh, I go pretty often." "How often have you gone during the last six months?" "Let me see. One-two-three, f-o-u-r times, I t-h-i-nk." "Of course, when you did go you spoke to the minister, and asked him to call around at your house when it was convenient?" "No." "And you have been four times to church in six months, have never introduced yourself to the minister, and yet you expect him to know you whenever he meets you on the street—do you think that is fair to the minister? Do you remember that the minister has to recall perhaps one or two or three thousand faces, where you have to recall only the minister's? And do you forget that often, when you go down street, your wits are wool-gathering, and you can pass your own wife without notice? Why blame the poor minister for being 'big feeling, ashamed to notice a poor man on the street,' when the truth is he didn't know you, or else was thinking of something else at the time you crossed his line of vision?" There are a good many ministers who suf-

fer from petty criticism, just because people forget that it is easier to remember one face than a thousand.

A minister tells a story concerning his advent to a new parish. A few days after his arrival, he was passing along the street when a small boy called him by his name. The minister stopped and chatted with the young Canadian. He asked him how he knew who he was. "Why," said the little fellow, "you are my minister." "What is your name, my lad?" So the youngster told him. "Now," said the minister, "I may forget your name and your face, for I have to remember a great many little boys in this town, but you will not forget me so easily; for, Johnnie, I am the only man on this street that wears this kind of a collar. Always speak to me if I do not speak to you." "Huh," said Johnnie, "the dog collar don't cut no ice. I know you because you're my minister. And you bet your boots, I'll speak to you, and" (very earnestly) "I'll tell you my name every time; because you know, Mr. Minister, my Dad felt my chin last night, and he says my whiskers is growing fast, and I won't look like this very long; and I couldn't expect you to know me, when I have a big long beard." Now that minister never forgot that boy. The potentialities of that chin caused the preacher to recall the rest of the face.

Then if you desire a special visit from the minister, tell him so. He is generally a very good mind-reader; yet you know that sometimes you may want him to come, but your wife is hardly prepared for company. I remember great preparations made, when I was a

boy, for the visit of the minister. Perhaps I will tell you about them sometime, but just now we are concerned with the minister who is living to-day. You cannot expect him to know by intuition that you are sick; and yet, when he happens to make a friendly call, not knowing the evil that has befallen you, you look very hurt and say: "Pastor, I've been sick a week, and you have never called." Let me tell you about a man, in one of the rural communities, who acted somewhat like that towards his pastor. When the sky pilot called, he said that he felt very much aggrieved for the minister did not seem to care whether he lived or died. The minister, in astonishment, replied, that as the aforesaid member lived three miles from the village, he had not heard of his illness. "But you have a phone," he said, "why did you not call me?" "Well," replied Groucher, "your predecessor always called here at least once a week." That put the Sky Pilot upon his mettle, and righteous indignation into his soul, "Did you send for the doctor when you fell sick this time?" "Oh, yes." "Rather expensive bringing him out here, isn't it?" Groucher looked reminiscent. "Four dollars a visit," he replied, in doleful voice. "By the way," said Sky Pilot, "how much do you subscribe towards the church?" For the first time since the pneumonia struck him, Groucher took a full breath, and his chest filled out like a turkey gobbler's. "Fifteen cents a week," was his proud boast. Then the man of God caused that chest to flatten as if it were a punctured balloon. "Don't you think that you expect a good deal of me for fifteen cents?"

Well, there are other folks who grumble because the preaching is not very profitable. It does not meet their needs. But, although the pastor exists for the very purpose of helping them, they never even hint to him that they have intellectual or spiritual problems that they are anxious to have solved. Most ministers, too, have office hours, when they are eager to meet people, who desire what was called, in my younger days, "spiritual conversation." And country parsons keep open house, and are ready to welcome, at any time, all who desire to have a friendly chat over soul-difficulties. Do not keep your troubles bottled up in your soul. Speak to your minister. I remember a minister who told that, when he was a student on his second summer field, he was visiting a home, and, at the evening meal, was introduced to a boarder whose face strangely interested him. After supper was over, the young man and he were left for a few minutes alone. Remembering his vocation, the young cleric asked the other young man, "Are you a Christian?" He was surprised to see the young fellow burst into tears, and hear amidst sobs: "I have been waiting for three months for somebody to ask me that question." That little parlour with its hair wreaths and woollen flowers was glorified that night, for a soul found peace with God there, and a young preacher tasted the joy of soul-winning. But how many people would find relief so much sooner if they would only speak to their minister, not that he is the only one who can direct to Christ, but he is perhaps the most accessible.

One word in conclusion. Remember that the minis-

ter needs a word of encouragement like everybody else. If he has helped you let him know it. For three years, an editor once told me, there was a department in his paper containing matter of a special character, written by a gentleman of great ability. During all these years there never came to the office a single word of appreciation; but just as soon as the department was dropped folks began to place bouquets upon the coffin. Oh, the pity of it! And ministers have the same experience. They get down into the Slough of Despond. The best cure for minister's "blue Monday" is a cheery note from some soul, who bears testimony to "the good the sermon did me yesterday." Speak to your minister!

XLI

WHY I GO TO CHURCH

THERE is a story told respecting the publisher of a yellow journal in New York, who was anxious to obtain a share of church advertising. He sent a solicitor to the ministers of various churches to ask for patronage; but the canvasser could get none because his paper was not read by churchgoers. When this report was carried back to the publisher, he said: "Go back to them and say, 'For whom do you advertise—those with whom you already do business, or those you want to do business with?'" That got them all. I fancy, however, that those preachers would have to write pretty attractive "ads," if they received much of a return from advertising in a yellow journal. In fact, many a church is in need of the aid of an advertising expert to inform the public just what claim she has upon the attention of the community. Well written and attractive advertising, when backed by an organisation which "delivers the goods," does much to accomplish church success. This Meditation keeps in mind the fact that many a religious advertisement fails to attract readers, and that this is just a little unpretentious talk concerning churchgoing.

Churchgoing is a habit of mine. I started pretty young; for I am a minister's son, and ministers' chil-

dren are expected to be very exemplary in conduct. Thus it is that I was carried to church when I was but a few weeks old, and I have been going there ever since. I am told that there was a time in my youthful days when my mother used to carry me out of the sacred edifice for the purpose of impressing upon a certain part of my anatomy, which is popularly regarded as having a very close connection with juvenile memory, the fact that even a minister's son must behave in the house of God. At this late date I do not remember very clearly those striking incidents; but I do have very vivid recollections of toddling off to service, with a half-penny closely clutched in my wee hand, and a clean handkerchief, with a peppermint tied in one corner for consumption during sermon time, securely tucked away in my pocket. I was off to church. Everybody could see it by my shining morning face. And do you know, after all these years, I haven't got out of the habit of giving my face a little extra attention on Sabbath morning, donning my good suit and putting a candy in my pocket? I think that I get as much satisfaction out of that journey to the house of God as I did when I was a boy.

Then a good many of my friends attend church service. My youthful training led me to value the friendship of Christian people. I have found them the very best folks that any community holds. If any one should be an authority upon "mean shysters" and hypocrites, it is the minister's son; for he generally knows the men who will not attend service, because they say that the preaching is too personal. He can

also tell you about the man who declares that he is going to starve the minister out because he cannot get his own way in regard to some church matter. Yes, he can tell a good many things that would make some folks shake their heads and mournfully declare that the world is certainly going to the dogs, and that the church is travelling after it just as fast as she can. But this minister's son writes this statement in cold type: "If you want to mix with good people, you had better go to church. You will find a larger percentage of good people amongst church attenders than anywhere else." Because I like good company, I go to church.

The church service meets a want in my soul. The devout man can find God anywhere; yet I fancy that the majority of men are like myself—they find a necessity for comradeship in worship. I have looked upon mountains, woods, leaping cataracts and the far-reaching sea, and my soul has been hushed into reverence; but when I bend the knee in company with other worshippers, I find myself in an atmosphere that is conducive to a reverence that is deeper far than nature ever arouses. When I lift my heart in company with others to the Heavenly Father, I find that sympathy for my fellow-man is very closely related to fellowship with God. I reach out my hand to find the hand of a brother, and understand what Jesus meant when He said: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst." I do not condemn the man who finds God in nature. I agree with him that God ought to be worshipped by the man who sees Him manifested in His works. All that I am saying is

that I need more than nature to inspire me to the highest reverence—I need fellow-worshippers.

The church service does me good. The singing lifts me. The prayers have a fashion of searching my soul. Often I find myself saying in my heart: "How beautifully the pastor has expressed my desire." I look upon the good men who gather the offering, and remember their fidelity to the cause of Christ. The hush of the Master's presence is upon my spirit. Then comes the sermon. I shall not tell you much about that. I shall just say that it is good preaching, and exalts Jesus Christ, and ought to help the worshippers. I am not glorifying preaching just now. Very often I can hardly tell just what there is in the service to inspire my soul; but I do know that there is a cumulative impression that is very wholesome.

Would you think it egotistic if I say that I go to church because I have a notion that the Lord Jesus needs me there? I am a professing Christian. The Church is a Divine institution, founded for the purpose of extending Christ's Kingdom in the world. I am interested in seeing that purpose carried out. I want folks to know that I am no slacker. There are some kinds of religious advertising that are objectionable; but the regular, devout attendance upon church service soon marks out a man as a follower of Christ. So I go to church. There are a great many other reasons for spending my Sabbaths in this way; but I have given a sufficient answer to the question. Why do you go to church? Just meditate upon this: Are you losing anything by non-attendance? Are your

children likely to miss the wholesome influence which regular church attendance exerted over your life? Think things through, and I fancy that you will not only go to church, but will become a most enthusiastic subscriber to the Forward Movement.

XLII

"I HAD BETTER BE A DOOR-KEEPER"

A NEGRO in Philadelphia requested his employer to release him so that he could go South. "What do you want to go for, Lafayette?" "Cos I'se called to a church down dar." "Called to a church? What are you going to be?" "I'se going to be sumfin. I dunno whedder I be de pasture, or de sextant, or de vesture man, but I'se going to be sumfin." That darky had a little of the spirit of the Psalmist who exclaimed, "I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." The humblest position had a mighty attraction for the servant of Jehovah. He would rather open the doors for others, stand on the threshold all the day long getting only an occasional peep inside, than to be debarred from the house of the Lord. When I was a wee laddie in Scotland, I was trained to go to church. In the Chapel to which I was taken, there was placed in the entry a table, and on that table were two plates to receive the offerings of the worshippers. At either end of the table sat a venerable Church officer. It was with great respect that I used to approach these old men and lay my half-penny on the plate to be greeted by: "That's richt, laddie," or "Ye're yir faither's laddie. One day yir pow wull wag in a poopit." Ever

since that I have had a great deal of respect for the door-keeper in the House of the Lord. When later in life I was brought to Canada, I did not appreciate the little velvet bags which were attached to long wooden handles and shoved under the nose of the worshipper as he sat in the pew. It always seemed to me that the glory of the big copper was completely eclipsed, when that miserable little bag swallowed it up.

But I have never lost my admiration for the door-keeper. When I was a half-grown laddie, I used to hang about the door of the church so much that my father had a private interview with me respecting my preference for the church-vestibule, when, as a minister's son, I should be sitting sedately in the minister's pew. But, in spite of that conference with my ministerial father, I still admire the door-keeper of the Lord's house and could wish myself with him. In my mind the door-keeper is a most important official in connection with the house of worship.

He is the man who is present early and sees to it that the temperature is just right, the audience room well aired, and the hymn-books placed ready for the use of strangers. He never misses the service. Others may go away over Sabbath, may visit other churches, may feel that they need a rest upon the Lord's day—"men may come and men may go," but the church usher is always on the job. His fidelity is an inspiration to many a soul who has found it a little difficult to be present on a rainy or snowy morning. Is it not good, when you dodge into the vestibule out of the rain, just to find the usher standing in his usual place, look-

ing as if it were the joy of his life to come to church on nasty mornings?

Have you ever thought that the reputation of a congregation in respect of friendliness is dependent upon the good brother who stands at the church door? You seldom behold sour, forbidding-looking individuals charged with the duty of welcoming folks to the house of worship. I am not ready to declare that church ushers are noted for their beauty; but I fancy that I am not transgressing the bounds of truth when I say that they possess a personal attractiveness that many an individual would give a great deal to own. Have you not noted how the usher's face lights up when you enter the vestibule and he sees that you are a stranger? Can any one give the glad hand like he? Before he has finished that handshake you feel as though you have known him all your days. There may not be another soul in the building with whom you are acquainted, but the door-keeper will soon get you into touch with friends. Doesn't he? "You do not know our pastor? If you just linger for a little while after service I shall be glad to introduce you." "I am putting you in Brother Goodman's pew. What is your name, I should like you to meet him. I'm sure you will like him." Before you have been two minutes in the building that sunny-faced usher has managed to get a lot of information out of you, and has started a glow in your heart that remains all the rest of the week.

And when you get seated comfortably in the pew you see the same usher placing a shabbily dressed

woman in one of the best seats in the house, and you hear the timid whisper: "Oh, thank you so much. I am a little deaf, you know." And you hear him say: "Let me take you to another pew where there is an acousticon." In spite of protests he places her in conditions where she will be sure to hear, and you turn up the Epistle of James just to see how well the usher remembers the apostolic instruction to ushers: "My brethren, hold not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect to persons. For, if there come into your synagogue a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, and there come in also a poor man in vile clothing; and ye have regard to him that weareth the fine clothing, and say, 'Sit thou here in a good place'; and ye say to the poor man, 'Stand thou there,' or 'sit under my footstool'; are ye not divided in your own mind, and become judges with evil thoughts?" And that kindly Christian act of that pleasant-faced usher makes you feel that here is a church which does not place undue emphasis upon the mighty dollar.

When the service is over the usher lingers just to speed you on your way. "I hope that you found the service helpful, and that you will come again." Did you not? The very welcome of the door-keeper was so kind, so human, so Christian, that long before the choir sang or the minister delivered his message, you were worshipping in an atmosphere of Christian brotherliness. It did you good. It helped to keep your faith in humanity and in the church. It brought you into the very presence of your Master. And you

are going again, and hope to follow the same usher down the aisle; but this time you want an introduction to the minister, for you think that you shall feel at home in that church.

XLIII

THE RE-BIRTH OF RELIGIOUS ENTHUSIASM

"YOUR HONOUR," said the policeman to the judge as he preferred a complaint against a coloured man, "this man was running up and down the Mill River road, waving his arms and otherwise raising the mischief, at half-past one in the morning. The people of that district complained, and they had a perfect right to." The judge frowned at Rasmus, who didn't seem to be particularly worried. "What do you mean by such unbecoming conduct?" his Honour demanded. "Religion, jedge," was the response. "Religion! Are you a Holy Roller or something like that? I have got religion, Rasmus, but I don't get up at midnight and tell everybody about it." "Dat's jes the diffunce, jedge. I ain't ershamed ob mine." Making all due allowance for the coloured brother's religious excesses, did he not strike the weak point in a great deal of the religious life of to-day? Are we not afraid to be enthusiastically out and out for Him who died for us?

The religious beliefs which are proclaimed enthusiastically usually march forward triumphantly. The Church which the risen Christ condemns most awfully is that of Laodicea—"Because thou art lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spew thee out of my

mouth." A dead Church has no message, and everybody is aware of the fact; but a lukewarm Church professes to declare the evangel, yet there is no conviction, no passion, no urgency in the note that is sounded. It is, according to the virile colloquialism of to-day, "a false alarm."

There are many indications that the churches of Canada are awakening to the danger of religious lukewarmness. We are hearing a good deal respecting the Forward Movement; and, while some people seem to be of the opinion that that great inter-church movement has been inaugurated simply to replenish coffers which had become empty during the years of war, the main purpose, as I understand it, is to deepen spiritual life, and as a consequence to arouse religious enthusiasm. The financial side of the work is regarded as dependent upon a deeper consecration to the Great Head of the Church. Another movement has been begun which is international in character. It aims at a revival of the old "Watch Night Meeting," in which the congregation met to watch the old year out and to welcome the new year in. In the past the memories and the hopes that crowd upon the soul at such an hour were found to be conducive to seriousness in respect to Christian duty. It is hoped that the good old custom of watching out the old year will be revived in the churches, and that much blessing may result as a consequence of re-consecration to Christ. An awakened interest in evangelism is also amongst the indications that the churches are rousing themselves to the danger of religious tepidity. Prayer also is made

unceasingly unto God by many a soul that longs for a great triumph of the kingdom of Christ after these years of sorrow and anguish due to the war.

Religious enthusiasm begins with the individual. It was always so. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul," says the Psalmist. The record respecting early Church is, "Every day in the temple, and at home they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ." Sherwood Eddy says that one of the missionaries to Korea testifies that about one hundred per cent. of the Christian converts witness for Christ. The people try to tell the good news to all they meet. The churches in that country show in one year 660 converts for each ordained man. Think of the enthusiasm that backs such a herald of the gospel. Every Christian in the community zealous for his Saviour—that is the secret of such marvellous success.

It appears to me that the deeper the religious experience through which the individual passes the greater will be his devotion to his Lord. We find no difficulty in understanding that a dweller in a non-Christian land may regard the wonderful story of redeeming love as good news, and may be so impressed by it as to have an irresistible impulse to tell it; but there are many souls dwelling in Christian lands who have been acquainted with the old, old story from childhood, whom the wonder of Divine interest has lost its power to surprise. That is due to two things. First, the preaching of the past few years has emphasised the Divine Fatherhood, and there has been a corresponding les-

sening of emphasis upon the doctrine of sin. The result has been that the marvel of the Divine forgiveness does not break with all its heart-melting power upon the soul. It was the wonder of God's great love that created enthusiasm in the days of old, and that love was seen most clearly when contrasted with human guilt. The other reason for the wane of religious enthusiasm is that we are living in an age in which meditation is fast becoming a lost art, "While I was musing the fire burned. Then spake I with my tongue."

Three elements enter into real religious enthusiasm, *viz.*, memory, gratitude, and the irresistible impulse to serve. It seems to me that memory is the basis of gratitude and service. What is called a crisis-conversion is a great event from which to date gratitude and service. The Apostle Paul went back to his conversion again and again. Some of the greatest leaders which Christianity has ever had were not ashamed to recall the hour when they settled affairs with their Lord, and felt that old things had passed away and all things had become new. I recognise that God has many ways of dealing with the human soul. I find the Scriptures making mention of some who were sanctified from birth; yet, as far as the records establish a precedent, I am satisfied that the normal experience of every follower of Jesus Christ was of an hour when the burden of guilt oppressed the soul in a fashion up to that time unknown, and when the individual threw himself upon the Divine mercy pleading that, for the sake of Jesus Christ, God would pardon his iniquity. The inspired records tell of relief of mind, of joy of

heart, of the impulse to tell others of that wonderful sense of forgiveness, and of an inner witness that the erstwhile burdened one knew himself to be a child of God. Moreover, these experiences have been repeated in the souls of untold numbers of men and women since Apostolic days.

The fact is that Christian enthusiasm must hark back to a great personal experience of the saving power of the Son of God. That was the secret of the Apostle Paul's Christian passion. How he loved to think of Him "who loved me and gave Himself up for me." The memory of the hour when there broke upon his understanding the marvel, the tenderness, the lavishness of the Divine sacrifice for him transformed him into an ardent lover of Jesus Christ. And his love for Him died not down; for he dwelt with Him, and oft meditated upon the wonder of the pity that sent his Saviour from heaven's glory to Calvary's agony and death.

XLIV

IN THE CLOUDY AND DARK DAY

AS I write, the East wind is blowing, the snow is melting and the damp atmosphere searches your very marrow. This is the sort of day when you do not expect to get a very cheery message even in the newspaper; for it affects a writer as it does a preacher. You are very apt to receive a much cheerier message when the skies are bright than when the message is delivered "in a dark and cloudy day." A very famous minister was asked by a certain pessimistic friend, who could not understand the optimism of the clerical brother, if he never doubted his soul's salvation. "Yes," was the reply. "I generally do when the East wind is blowing." It is wonderful how the soul is influenced by our physical condition. Did you ever think that possibly one of the elements that enter into the enjoyment of heaven, will be perfect physical health?

Every one has his cloudy and dark days. Some people have more of them than is necessary. They appear to love the clouds and to welcome the darkness. They never seem to have heard the exhortation: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say unto you, Rejoice." But, on the other hand, there are people who are simply overwhelmed by their misfortunes, and can-

not behold a ray of light piercing the awful gloom that has come down upon their souls. It is to people like them that my message is addressed to-day. Before I rose this morning two expressions in the one hundred and seventh Psalm were singing in my heart: "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way. . . . He led them also by a right way."

These solitary ways, these wanderings, how they break the heart! For some of my readers this has been a hard year. The sorrow and loneliness of it have been inexpressible, for the heart is continually turning to a grave in France, which you have never seen, but which holds the form of one who was brave and true even unto death. And since the boy "went West" you have been wandering in a solitary way. Yes, that is true; but remember that God does not leave you there. Just read the Psalm and you will find: "Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. He led them also by a right way." The soul that cries upon God is very likely to discover some things that are a perfect revelation to him.

He will discover that the Lord has not forgotten him. There are some folks who leap to the conclusion, when sickness or disaster or bereavement comes upon them, that either God has forgotten them or that He is dealing very harshly with them. I must confess that there are many things that I cannot explain. The mystery of sorrow and suffering remains very largely a mystery to me, not because I have not passed through trial and suffering, but simply because I am

not ready with an explanation that will fit all cases. I dare not assume that all suffering comes as punishment, for then I should be forced to include my Lord amongst those who had to suffer because of personal guilt. No! There is not much light upon the problem by assuming that suffering is always an evidence of personal sin.

I have a very dear friend who is in deep trouble. He is suffering from cancer. His son died a couple of weeks ago, a brilliant young man with bright prospects. A daughter has gone blind. As I think of that father and remember his godly life and his enthusiasm for the cause of Christ, and then recall his sorrows, I hesitate (and so will you) to say that they have come as punishment. There must be some other explanation of such experiences. Let me try to let a little beam of sunshine into a cloudy and dark day.

Did you ever think that perhaps sorrow and suffering come upon the soul for the sake of other people? Now do not throw this suggestion aside as unworthy of notice. Suffering is part of the soul's equipment for service on behalf of others. Just recall the ministers whose sermons really help you. They are the men who know, who have travelled the road which they describe, who have gone down into the valley of suffering and sorrow and who have come back with a heart of sympathy and a hand of help for other strugglers. Often I have heard young preachers criticised for ineffectual utterances when they were doing the best that they could. There are some experiences of life that are beyond the ken of a young minister. The awful

blasts of temptation must beat upon his soul, the anguish of sorrow bruise his spirit, the terrors of loneliness break his heart—yes, he will be an old man before he can sound the depths of human agony and bring back the declaration "I know." In the meantime he must do the best that he can. Well, if that is true respecting the minister, is it not likely to be true concerning you? Have you not a ministry? Have your experiences been for your own special benefit? I trow not. The cloudy and dark day came to fit you for better service.

"The soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and He delivered them out of their distresses. He led them also by a right way." Loneliness and wandering are enough to cause the soul to faint, but God does not forget. The cry of the stricken one reaches His ears. He leads by a right way. He satisfieth the longing soul. Now go back to the very beginning of the Psalm. "His mercy endureth forever; let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom He hath redeemed from the hand of the adversary." Your troubles, and your experiences of God's help granted in the midst of them, have some relation to other lives. Your heart has ached in order that you might learn the tender mission of healing other hearts.

I wonder who helps a broken heart most. I knew a man once who had a little lad whom he nearly worshipped. But the laddie sickened and died, and the father seemed to get no comfort in the midst of his sorrow. Many hopes had died along with the little chap. Many tried to comfort the stricken man with-

out avail. He could not shed a tear. At last there came a woman. She looked on the little waxen form lying in the coffin, and, taking the father by the hand, she said very simply: "I lost a little lad like him. I know how you feel." It was then that the fountains of the great deep broke up.

There are many lonely hearts just now. The solitary way has its compensations if you find God at the end of it, and permit Him to lead you by the right way. Then you will know sufficient concerning His tenderness and Fatherhood to enable you to cheer somebody else; and it will be true of you, as it was true of a preacher of whom I once heard, who had preached an unusually helpful sermon to stricken hearts: "That message was born out of the travail of his own soul." One reason why you have walked the desert road is that you might know God better, and that you might give a helping hand to others to find Him who helped you.

XLV

CURVATURE OF THE SOUL

I HAVE always pitied the sufferer from spinal trouble. It not only brings misery to the patient but also grief to all his friends. Yet there is something far worse than spinal curvature. A little lad, one of whose shoulders was higher than the other, was talking with a gentleman who was greatly impressed by the intelligence of the boy. The man's sympathies were aroused as he thought of the handicap under which the laddie was starting life, and, as he held the little chap on his knee, he remarked: "It is too bad that your body is so crooked." And the child-like answer came back: "My daddy says that there's something worse than a crooked back. He says that, if your soul is straight, God doesn't mind the hump on your back." Dear little lad, he was learning the greatest of all lessons—the greatest beauty is not physical, but moral. Often a crooked soul dwells in a house that is physically perfect. And you will frequently discover beautiful souls dwelling in bodies that seem to emphasise the supremacy of the spirit over the earthly house of this tabernacle. A crooked body is no evidence that its occupant is like unto the house in which he dwells. Nor is a physically perfect body any certification that a beautiful soul is housed therein.

Curvature of the soul is far more common than curvature of the spine, and one of the strange things connected with the disease is that its victims are often unaware that there is anything the matter with them. In this they differ greatly from those who suffer from spinal curvature.

Soul-crookedness is due to a variety of causes. The old theologians would tell you that all moral curvature is due to the operation of sin in the nature, and they were not far astray. We are all aware how indulgence in physical sins destroys the body, and some of us have witnessed the debasing influence of sinful physical indulgence upon the very soul. In this connection I need only mention such sins as impurity, drunkenness, addiction to drugs—these all testify to the fact that physical sins bear a terrible harvest both of bodily and moral suffering. And the suffering is not confined to the sinner himself. Often his friends suffer more than he; and, in many cases, he bequeaths to his children an entail of physical misery that at times leads them to question the wisdom and goodness of God, but which, after all, is only the outworking of the law that the iniquities of the fathers are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation. A great deal of the misery of the world might have been averted if men were not so insistent that they have the right to please themselves independent of the interests of any one else, and even irrespective of generations yet unborn.

The trend of sin is always downward. The boy, who is ready to lie about little things, will not be overly

scrupulous when he has to meet the greater things of life, for truthfulness is largely a habit. In one of Thomas Nelson Page's books one of his characters says: "I know that man. He is the greatest liar on earth. He has lost the power to tell the truth." Covetousness has led many a soul to violate laws both human and divine. It has turned hearts naturally sympathetic into stone. It leads its victim to gauge success in terms of dollars. It esteems shameful possession as greater than honourable poverty. It is one of the most notable sins of our age. Ambition often, like Napolean, sacrifices Josephine upon his altar. It is the maker of war, the desolator of homes, the widow's and the orphan's curse. The illegitimate love of power, which here we call ambition, has ruined many a soul. It was the curse of Wilhelm, and it is the curse of many a man not so notorious.

But there are other souls whose crookedness is due not so much to sin as to toil and care. We sometimes smile when we are told that this is a sad world. We like the optimistic note. There are times, however, when we are forced to listen to the story of some one who feels that he has not been treated fairly, or into whose life have come cares that crush his soul and bruise his spirit and turn the sweet wine of life into vinegar. We can never smile over the attitude of a man who is ready to indict the present social order or God Himself as being responsible for all the miseries which he endures. We may not agree with him, but we pity him because his troubles have warped his nature. We feel that the burden has been too great for

his spirit to bear, and thus he has joined the ranks of the grouchers.

Others have suffered the loss of loved ones and their sorrowful experience has occasioned soul-curvature. How often you witness a kindly, generous, sympathetic soul changed into a bitter, self-centred kill-joy, whose very approach is dreaded by his friends. No one will dare to say that some of the sorrows of life are exceedingly distressing, but no one should let his private griefs spoil the lives of others. There are too many gloomy, cranky individuals concerning whom folks say: "He is a good man, but I am glad that I do not have to live with him."

It is a great thing to keep a young heart. Keep young! You do not need to invest in hair dye in order to do it. Expedients like that only lead others to pity the old man who is trying to give the impression that he is young. But take an interest in others. Be ready to smile when others are happy. Have at least one good laugh every day. It is wonderful what it will do for you. Then keep a song in your heart. Dirges are not very cheery. Discard the minor note. Remember your mercies. Make it a daily practice just to count up your reasons for thanksgiving, and with God's help, endeavour to carry your burden like a man, and it is wonderful how that curvature will straighten out.

XLVI

THE WONDER OF IT

THE soul that has gone through the experience which, for want of a better word, is popularly called conversion, is frequently overwhelmed by the wonder of it. In my early days, it was very common to hear religious experiences related in public, and, while at this distance it would seem that many of them were simply imitations of some outstanding testimony, there was sufficient originality in the declarations of say thirty or forty persons to impress the listener with the fact, that the wonder of the transaction in which the soul became conscious of a new relation to God was very real and transporting. I confess that I have always had the instinctive feeling, so characteristic of the nation which gave me birth, that some things are too sacred to be discussed with anybody and everybody. Yet I know that many men have an irresistible impulse to use the words of the Psalmist. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul." The wonder of what has transpired is so great that there is mighty relief in telling somebody else about it.

Once I went to see an old man who was, as the Scotch say, "wearin' awa' to the land o' the leal." He was extremely old. For something like seventy years

he had been a member of the one church, and the whole community knew him as a follower of Jesus Christ. The afternoon I called to see him, he was very despondent; and it was evident that the reason for it was that the earthly house was becoming very frail. In order to lift his spirits I enquired: "Did you ever tell me what the Lord did for your soul down at the old River Church?" The tears dried as if by magic; the dear old face was full of eagerness; a hand was pushed out from the bed as if to hold me back. "Wait! Wait!!" the old man said. "Let me tell you what the Lord did for me over seventy years ago." As he told it, it was a very thrilling story. When he had finished, I simply enquired: "Brother McConnell, if the Lord did all that for you so long ago, you are not afraid to trust Him now when you are so near the deep river, are you?" The old man's face was transformed as he exclaimed, "My Blessed Saviour! I'd trust Him anywhere." A day or two later he crossed the flood, and I doubt not that "all the open region was filled with horses and chariots, with trumpeters and pipers, with singers, and players on stringed instruments, to welcome him as he went up and entered in at the beautiful gate of the city."

The wonder of it has exhausted the religious vocabulary of saints in all ages. Behind that deathless choice, every one of them seems to be conscious that there is a supernatural power at work, and that, in the last analysis, God is the author of the mighty change which has occurred in the soul. In my young manhood, I was acquainted with a saintly old minister who had

long retired from the active work of the ministry. At the communion service he used to sit at the table along with my father, who was pastor of the church. I can see that old man's face yet as he would choose the closing hymn. It was generally Isaac Watts' "How sweet and awful is the place." I can hear the thrill in his voice, for, even down to old age, he was a beautiful singer:

"Why was I made to hear Thy voice
And enter while there's room,
While thousands make a wretched choice
And rather starve than come?

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast,
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste
And perished in our sin."

The wonder of it filled the old saint's heart. It had not lost its soul-stirring power with the passing of the years. Do you know, I used to look upon that face, filled with a humble and adoring love, and think: "The heavenly choir will be glad to welcome him. He has a melodious voice, and he sings with the heart and understanding also."

The wonder of it stirs every heart that has met the great change. You learn these things as you talk with people who make a sort of confessor of you. Since I began to write these Meditations, I have heard from many individuals whom I have never met; and over and over again, they have sounded that note of wondering joy which is so characteristic of the soul who

has been redeemed by the precious blood. The marvel of that mighty crisis in the soul's experience never loses its power over their minds and hearts.

And the wonder of it stirs other people. One day I said to a merchant: "There is a revival meeting in the village church, is there not?" "Yes," he replied. "How are things going?" I asked. "Well," said he, "I should say first-rate. I'm not very religious myself, but I respect a religion which has some effect upon a man's honesty. This revival's making people honest. Since it started I have collected about six hundred dollars which I had written off to profit and loss. The folks may shout all they like, as far as I'm concerned, if they keep paying their debts. If that preacher needs any money to keep things going I'm right there with the goods; for he is a blessing to the whole village." When I saw that the preacher belonged to a sect which did not stand well in the estimation of the public generally you can understand that the wonder of the work that was going on under its auspices seemed the greater to that merchant.

Many of my readers have read of the conversion of John Colby, a brother-in-law of Daniel Webster, the great American orator. It seems that Webster was the youngest child in the family, and that Colby had married his eldest half-sister. Thus there was a great difference in the ages of the two men. When Webster was an old man himself he journeyed to see Colby, for he had heard that he had made life's great choice. This is what he said after the visit:

"I should like to know what the enemies of religion

would say to John Colby's conversion. There was a man as unlikely, humanly speaking, to become a Christian as any man I ever saw. He was reckless, heedless, impious, never attended church, never experienced the good influence of associating with religious people. Here he has been living on in that reckless way until he has got to be an old man—until a period of life when you naturally would not expect his habits to change; and yet he has been brought into that condition in which we have seen him to-day—a penitent, trusting, humble believer. Whatever people may say, nothing can convince me that anything short of the grace of Almighty God could make such a change as I, with my own eyes, have witnessed in the life of John Colby." Later Webster met one of his friends, John Taylor, and addressed him thus: "Well, John Taylor, miracles happen in these later days as well as in the days of old." "What now, squire?" asked Taylor. "Why, John Colby has become a Christian. If that is not a miracle what is?"

There is not space at my disposal for the further discussion of the wonder of the experience concerning which we have been meditating. The subjects of it, as well as those who are personally quite untouched by the marvellous transaction, unite in declaring that the Workman throughout it all is none other than God Himself.

XLVII

OUR LOAD-LIMIT

SAMUEL PLIMSOLL, the sailors' friend, was a coal merchant, who, in 1868, was elected to represent Derby in the British House of Commons. His severe indictment of ship-owners led in 1876 to the passing of the Merchant Shipping Act, which empowered the Board of Trade to detain any vessel deemed unsafe, restricted the amount of cargo, and rendered compulsory on every ship a mark (known as the Plimsoll mark), indicating the maximum load-line. Previous to his day, many a poor sailor was sent out in some miserable old tub which soon went to the bottom, being expedited thereunto, according to popular belief, by the weight of many and various insurance risks upon the ancient craft. Britain's reputation as a sea power was being ruined, because a few individuals, for the sake of gold, were ready to send to their deaths the brave fellows who "do business in great waters." The Merchant Shipping Act was aimed at all such persons, as well as against some others who, in their eagerness to obtain large returns from a vessel, so grossly overloaded her that the voyage was attended "with much loss not only of the lading and the ship, but also of the lives" of the seamen. The Plimsoll mark was established to indicate the maximum load

that a particular vessel may carry, and every British port warden sees to it that it is not exceeded. No matter under how great load a ship may stagger into a British port, the warden sees to it that she is not permitted to stagger out of it. She carries her load as only British ships manned by British sailors carry a burden—with joyous exhilaration.

I have been thinking that we need a Plimsoll mark in every life. There is a limit beyond which we ought not to go. Sometimes we do not find that out until the burden that we are carrying causes our little craft to touch the rocks. Sometimes, however, we are surprised to discover that our best friends do not regard our little boat as safe as we, in our pride, had imagined it. That is the hour to have our ship re-surveyed and have the Plimsoll mark placed where there is no question regarding its correctness.

Many a man is carrying a burden that is quite beyond his physical strength. He has great joy in his work, for real work has always the element of gladness in it. He is helping others by means of his daily task; yet his burden is so great that each day he draws a little upon his reserve, until at last it is exhausted. He is down and out. Oh, if he had had a Plimsoll mark to guide him! He might have escaped that breakdown—that nervous collapse. Every medical practitioner can tell of men and women, who have tried to sail the stormy sea of life, with a big cargo in a very creaky hull, with the inevitable consequence of much damage to lading and ship. I have listened to some of these reminiscences myself, and have to admit

that, for a good many years, my craft had no Plimsoll line. I have one now. A medical port-warden branded it in. He expects it to stay there and to be observed religiously.

The majority of folks have to determine their own Plimsoll mark. They have to learn by experience just what load they can carry. "Yes, I have slackened a little in my housework," said an energetic woman, who pushed her housekeeping to the limit of endurance and strength. "I have found that I cannot wash, iron and be a Christian all in one day." I suppose that she meant that the physical strain was so great that she would be very apt to act as though her religion had little effect upon her temper. I wonder if that is why so many professedly Christian people get the credit of being very cranky. I wonder if what is really the matter with them is not that their little craft carries no Plimsoll mark. No load-limit has been established. They try to wash, iron and be a Christian all in one day, with the result that the Christian's reputation suffers considerable damage. There is no question respecting their goodness; but it is undeniable that they are not easy to live with. Sometimes I suspect that they are inclined to think that the hostility of certain people towards them is due to hostility towards religion; when, in reality, it is a protest against loading the ship in defiance of the Plimsoll line.

I should be very sorry to think that any reader of these Meditations might gather from these words of mine that I believe that Divine help is not supplied in our hour of need. I know by experience that it is;

but I also know that we have no mandate from our Lord to lead us to suppose that when we go on, year after year, violating the laws which govern the human body, God is going to perform a miracle, and bring our little ship and its cargo safe into port. God does perform miracles, but not for persistent and unrepentant sinners against His expressed will. And the laws which govern the human body are just an expression of His will. One poor fellow, whom the Master healed, was bid: "Go, sin no more lest a worse thing come upon thee." Some of us to whom life is left have a very wholesome respect for the load-limit, for we have learned that failure to observe the Plimsoll mark generally spells disaster.

I have seen ships brought into port when every "sailor man" was amazed at the sight, and when every whistle and horn in the harbour was sounding a welcome. Good seamanship had brought to a safe anchorage a ship that had been given up as lost. And I have known a few men who worked on, in spite of warnings but under the call of duty, and who have by careful "navigation" been able to accomplish what appeared to be two men's work, but these are exceptional cases. The danger is that we regard ourselves as being safe in ignoring the load-limit.

I have an idea that the Plimsoll line on a ship is dependent, to some extent, upon the efficiency of her master and crew. If I am not mistaken, they are taken into consideration when that fateful mark is made upon her hull; but I am sure of this, that the soul's load-limit depends upon who is captain of the ship. The

soul that has been entrusted to Christ, that is drawing upon Him for wisdom and help, that realises that His grace is sufficient for him and that in weakness he is made strong—that soul can carry a bigger load of care, suffering and sorrow than many another craft that seems of little worth in the eyes of the experienced man of the world.

"Simple rule and safest guiding,
Inward peace and inward might,
Star upon our path abiding—
'Trust in God and do the right.' "

XLVIII

AN ATTRACTIVE RELIGION

I READ something the other day that pleased me mightily. It is to be found in Mark Guy Pearse's story of Daniel Quorm and his religious notions. He describes a certain Widow Pascoe, whose conception of the road to heaven was that "it was walled up like the cities of Anak, and plenty of broken glass upon the top of the walls would have been a real consolation to her mind. She would have had the entrance gate covered with spikes, and surrounded with notices of spring-guns and man-traps, and warnings that trespassers would be prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law. . . . It was meal-time to her when, like Ruth, she could come hither and dip her parched corn in the vinegar . . . then she did eat and was sufficed and left." There are still a few folks who like sour pickles, but such people do not make good travelling representatives of the religion of Jesus Christ.

There are very few business houses that desire gloomy forbidding countenances to figure in any photograph which announces that these individuals are connected with the business. On all hands we demand that the people who deal with the public shall be men and women of a pleasant countenance. It seems to be quite as reasonable a demand that the representa-

tives of Jesus Christ shall show, in their very faces, that they are possessed of something that makes life brighter and sweeter. I do not suppose that I could ever be a member of the Salvation Army, but I like to look at the Army on the street. They always give me the impression that they keep away from the vinegar jug. I lived for a short time in a Quaker settlement. Whether it was due to the fact that the women all wore poke bonnets, and that a face that is passably good-looking has its beauty accentuated by the style of headgear, or whether it was due to the other fact that I was young and somewhat impressible, I retain a very pleasant recollection of the attractiveness of their religious life as revealed by the countenance.

"The lives of Christians is the only Bible that some people read," so writes one religious author. Many years ago a greater authority declared: "Ye are the epistle of Christ." There was a day before the advent of the typewriter when a letter was much more difficult to read than it is to-day. Poor penmanship and punctuation, faulty spelling and blotted paper made the task of deciphering the message a very difficult and tedious one. The typewriter has done much to remedy this state of things, and thus we often miss the full import of the Apostolic statement. It is a solemnising thought that the Christian man or woman is regarded by others as "living letters." There is little difficulty in reading them, and most people feel quite competent to undertake the task. But all my readers have noticed that some messages are more attractive than others.

Well now, what is the peculiar attraction of the religion of Jesus Christ, of which His followers are the epistles? I am not going to tell you that religion is very apt to make a man honest; for I recognise that many a man who makes no claim to being religious is quite honest in his dealings with his fellow-men. Neither shall I speak of its influence upon morality in general; for you may have a morality that is divorced from religion. Nor shall I tell you that the chief glory of the Christian religion is to make men unselfish, though I believe that the Gospel has done more along these lines than any other influence in the world. Yet we may find, in every community in Canada, men who do not acknowledge Christ as Saviour and Master who are kindly in word and act. What I am going to declare is worthy of honest consideration. "The personal relation between the soul and Christ is the underground spring which makes possible the growth of all the virtues."

There is a great difference between religion and religiosity. The first lays the emphasis upon duty, the second upon sentiment. Now a religion without sentiment is a very cold and heartless thing; but a religion that is all sentiment is not likely to affect life very beneficially. When duty is steeped in love you have the fundamental peculiarity of the Christian religion. Love for Him who died is that which leads to obedience to Him that liveth. It is the Cross of sacrifice that gives Christianity such a power over the hearts of men. And that is quite understandable, for the human heart is conscious of sin. There are times when

the burden of guilt is overwhelming. The soul that is able to cast the burden upon the Great Sin-Bearer passes through an experience which is rightly called the new birth, in which old things pass away and all things become new. In that hour there is born not simply a new desire—the desire to please the Divine substitute—but the consciousness of a new power, the certainty that the pardoned sinner is linked in some mysterious fashion with Him who conquered evil, proved His worthiness to be a sacrifice on behalf of the sinner, and has come back from the grave to assure men that the penalty has been met for all who accept Him as their Saviour, and moreover is ready to aid them to make good in the struggle for a noble manhood.

It is this underground spring that starts all the virtues blooming. The new birth transforms life. It glorifies character. This combination of the sentimental and the ethical produces the most wonderfully attractive characters that the world contains. It is the chief attraction of the religion of Jesus Christ. You frequently notice that the water springs become choked and have to be opened afresh. When a boy I went down into the old well once just to clear the spring at the bottom, and afterwards for several days we carried water from another well. But the attention did the well good. Many a soul would be benefitted by a cleansing that gives that wonderful consciousness of fellowship with Christ an opportunity to take possession of the heart. Our old well filled up with clear, cold water once the spring was cleared;

and when the soul lives in constant fellowship with Jesus Christ the whole life will become wonderfully attractive. But you cannot have an attractive religion without Divine co-operation any more than you can grow palm trees in the desert without water-springs to satisfy their thirst.

XLIX

THE CARE OF GOD

I RECALL reading of an incident which occurred during the war in a historic church in Ayr, Scotland. The story was first published in the Kilmarnock *Standard* and, as I happen to have been born there the fact that the name of "Robbie Burns' toon" is attached to the newspaper caught my attention. Here is the article in part: "The war lies very near to the heart at the present time; and whether the heart is the seat of the emotions or not, the well-springs of the emotions are very sympathetic with it. The congregation had already sung that beautiful little Psalm, the 121st, 'I to the hills will lift mine eyes,' to the tune, 'French.' The Psalm and the tune go together. They always do. The one is simple and the other is simple, and the flowing measure of the tune suffices to bring out the beauties of the Psalm. Nearly every Scottish child knows 'I to the hills.' It takes rank with 'The Lord is my Shepherd,' and 'All people that on earth do dwell.'

"The Lord thee keeps; the Lord thy shade
On thy right hand doth stay;
The moon by night thee shall not smite
Nor yet the sun by day.

The Lord shall keep thy soul; He shall
Preserve thee from all ill.
Henceforth thy going out and in
God keep forever will."

"The congregation sang the Psalm. It went warwards to a young Highlander who had been wounded in a recent battle and lay stretched on the field. Somewhere in the north of Scotland he had learned 'I to the hills' in Gaelic, and of course the Gaelic version of it was as sweet to him as ours is to us. He began to sing the old Psalm, and out over the field his singing reached as far as his voice would carry. One can imagine the effect upon the wounded Scots lying around. It was childhood and the days of youth over again. It was the enshrinement of memories and associations. It was a present help in the day of trouble. Then came by a Scottish regiment marching, and the men heard it, and felt it; and one of them on his way back from the conflict noted the spot from which the sound proceeded. At night he went back to look for the singer. All was quiet. The stars were shining down. The rage of battle had ceased. The Highlander wandered backwards and forwards looking for the singer who had ceased to sing and lay quiet. So the searcher raised his own voice. 'Sing it again, laddie,' he called out; 'sing it again!' and the laddie, hearing, responded, and sang on till the searcher found him and carried him back to the base. And now he is once more at home, wounded, and in the North Countrie. He had not slumbered who kept him. 'Let us sing the Psalm again,' concluded the minister. The

organ rolled out the old tune, but when the time came for the voices to join there were very few that were able to do it."

I have not dared to curtail the article more, for I realise that the story has an appeal in it that is greater than anything that I can write; and I have been thinking of lonely and anxious hearts amongst my readers who need the strength and comfort that the sense of God's care always gives. Life is hard for a great many. The burdens they have to bear bruise their spirits. Anxieties fret their souls. Sorrows break their hearts. What shall I say to folks like that? Thank God I have a message: "The Lord thee keeps."

The personal care of God is taught from one end of the Bible to the other. God is a person. Man is made in His image and is the object of His love. There are some folks who would have us believe that the great God is too exalted to have very much concern about the children of men; but the man who has learned the Scotch version of the Psalms in his boyhood or who has followed the noble declarations of the prayer book of the Church of England, who has read the history of the patriarchs and saints of Old Testament days or who has had any dealings with Him at all, knows that the interest of God in men is very real and personal.

There are times when the wonder of the Divine care for us is simply overwhelming. Once out at sea, with waters all about me and the firmament above me, there came upon my soul a sense of the wonder of the interest of God in men. There rang in my brain the

words of the ancient Hebrew poet: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou shouldst visit him?" And soon the stars of night began to march out; and as I gazed upwards into that vast profound, I could almost fancy Eliphaz asking his old question: "Is not God in the height of Heaven? And behold the height of the stars, how high they are. And thou sayest: What doth God know? Can He judge through the thick darkness?" Out on that great expanse of waters the sense of a mighty power that guided the stars in their courses was very real. But does He care for me?—that was the question that filled my soul.

Now there is no more satisfactory answer to that question than that which was brought to us by Jesus Christ. He taught us to call God Father. That very epithet is a guarantee of loving care. Do you want another assurance of it? Read the sixth chapter of Matthew. Allow it to fill your mind and to stir your heart. Take up the various expressions one by one: "Your Father," "thy Father," "your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things," "Your Heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" What a wonderful procession of comfort-bringers! Then remember the declaration, made with such tremendous assurance by the Apostle Paul, in the eighth chapter of Romans: "He that spared not His own Son, but freely delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him freely give us all things?" God does care. Yes! He cares for the individual. Calvary bears witness to that heartening truth.

And yet, although God is our Father, there are times when we have to suffer. One day I met a little chap of my acquaintance marching along by his father's side. His cheeks were tear-stained. I asked him where he was going. He replied: "I'm goin' to the dentist, I'm goin' to get a toof out. Daddy says it's goin' to hurt. I'm not 'fraid. Daddy's goin' to hold my hand." Dear little lad, he taught some older folks a lesson that day.

> "Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
> Yet will I fear none ill;
> For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
> And staff me comfort still."

He is our Father, and that means even more than Shepherd. Wisdom, care, love of the tenderest sort—these are found in our Father; and He is true enough, and rich enough, and mighty enough to fulfil all His promises.

L

THE TRANSFORMING TOUCH

I AM not acquainted with the contents of the school books of to-day; but there was one story, told in one of the old readers in use in the days of my boyhood, which was very fascinating in its character. It is told by Nathaniel Hawthorne, the famous American writer, who founds it upon an old Greek myth. King Midas lost his soul to love of gold, and was given the golden touch—the power to transform everything he touched into gold. He touches books—their wisdom is lost in gold. He touches flowers—their fragrance and beauty are lost in gold. He touches his little daughter, Marigold, and she too turns to gold. Wisdom, beauty, love fall before the all-consuming power of gold. It is a startling story, which, however, has a message for our own day.

But I am not going to discuss the curse of possessing the power to transform everything into gold. I have a better theme. To-day I want to meditate a wee bit about the transformation of character, and the part which some folks play in it. No doubt many of my readers have been impressed with the fact that some employers are able to get a great deal more out of their employés than some others. They seem to evoke a loyalty, an affection, a service, which many a man

would give much to possess. We have seen the germs of that loyalty in the life of the child who has just begun to attend school. Some teachers call it out in a wonderful way. They possess a sympathy and love to which the child responds instinctively. And men and women are just grown-up children. Any transformation of character is generally accomplished through the influence of others who love them, are ready to sacrifice for them, and rejoice over every step of progress which they make upwards.

There has just come into my hands a little book written for boys by Archer Wallace. It is published by the Missionary Education Movement, and tells the story of Canadian heroes of mission fields overseas. Eight Canadians, who served as missionaries, are chosen as typical of the class of worker who is carrying the Gospel to the dark corners of the earth. It is interesting to study the secret of the success which has attended the efforts of Canada's sons. Every one of the men whose work is described in this little book, from Herbert Girling who had only about three years service, to Virgil C. Hart, with thirty-five years to his credit, seems to have been strong in affectional power. He loved folks, and it was love for folks that led him to sacrifice ease and comfort for the sake of carrying to others that Gospel, which had brought health and healing to his own soul.

One of the stories in the book makes a strong appeal to my mind. One of these Canadian heroes, who was on his way to the mission field, was offered a salary of $10,000 per year if he would abandon his

purpose to undertake the duties of physician and surgeon to a mining camp. Forty years ago that was counted a big salary. What enthusiasm must have burned in the soul of Davidson MacDonald when he hesitated not a moment, but saw in the mission-field, rather than in the mining camp, his greatest opportunity for helping folks. During his many years of service in Japan, in addition to missionary practice he had many opportunities of serving Americans and Europeans resident in the country; and it is bracing to learn that this doctor, who might have had $10,000 a year, turned over all his fees to the Board which sent him out, for the purpose of extending the work which he had at heart—and some of these fees were munificent.

The story of John Geddie, the heroic missionary to the South Sea Islands, is told in such a fashion as to put iron into your blood; and your heart will ache in sympathy with John E. Davis, the leper-hero of South India. Walter T. Currie, the man who helped to light up West Africa, Charles N. Mitchell, the beloved Don Carlos of Bolivia, and William J. McKenzie, a trail-ranger in Korea, are described in such a fashion as to cause the reader to feel proud that these men were sons of Canada. But what gives this little volume its greatest interest to me just now is the fact that here and there it discloses the quality of soul which made these Canadian Missionary heroes such effective workers. They loved folks. It is that which has lifted them up to a place of renown amongst their fellow-countrymen. In some cases the biographer frankly states that his

hero was not clever, but he glorifies his burning heart.

I wonder if the tender, sympathetic heart is not indispensable to the transforming touch. We are all aware that it is God who transforms a vile sinner into an heir of glory; but God uses means. There are some folks who, with the very best intentions, seem to do a lot of mischief. Do you remember how in "Oliver Twist," Dickens makes one of his characters, Rose Mayhew, in the sweetness of her pure girlhood, touch the soiled, warped soul of poor Nancy? Nancy burst into tears. "Oh! Lady, lady," she cried, clasping her hands passionately before her face, "if there were more like you, there would be fewer like me, there would, there would!"

Have you ever felt that quality of a man's character may be detected in his very hand-shake? When I was a young man, I attended a church where there was a sunny-faced usher. He had the finest hand-shake that I ever felt. You could not help feeling that there was more than physical contact in that hand-shake. The spirit behind it gave significance to the touch. It was no limp, perfunctory, fish-tail shake; his whole soul went into it. I used to seek the door at which he was stationed, for I did delight in his hearty welcome. It was when I heard him pray that I got to know the secret of his brotherly touch. He was a man who lived near God. He had real fellowship with Jesus Christ. That Heavenly comradeship reacted upon his character and got into his very touch: and I have been thinking, as I recall the influence of that man, that many another individual, who may

never be very wise nor very wealthy, may after all attain the power of that golden touch, which awakens to life beauties of soul which lie dormant in other lives. "No longer I, but Christ who liveth in me."

THE END

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Stobo, E. J.

The glory of His robe

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